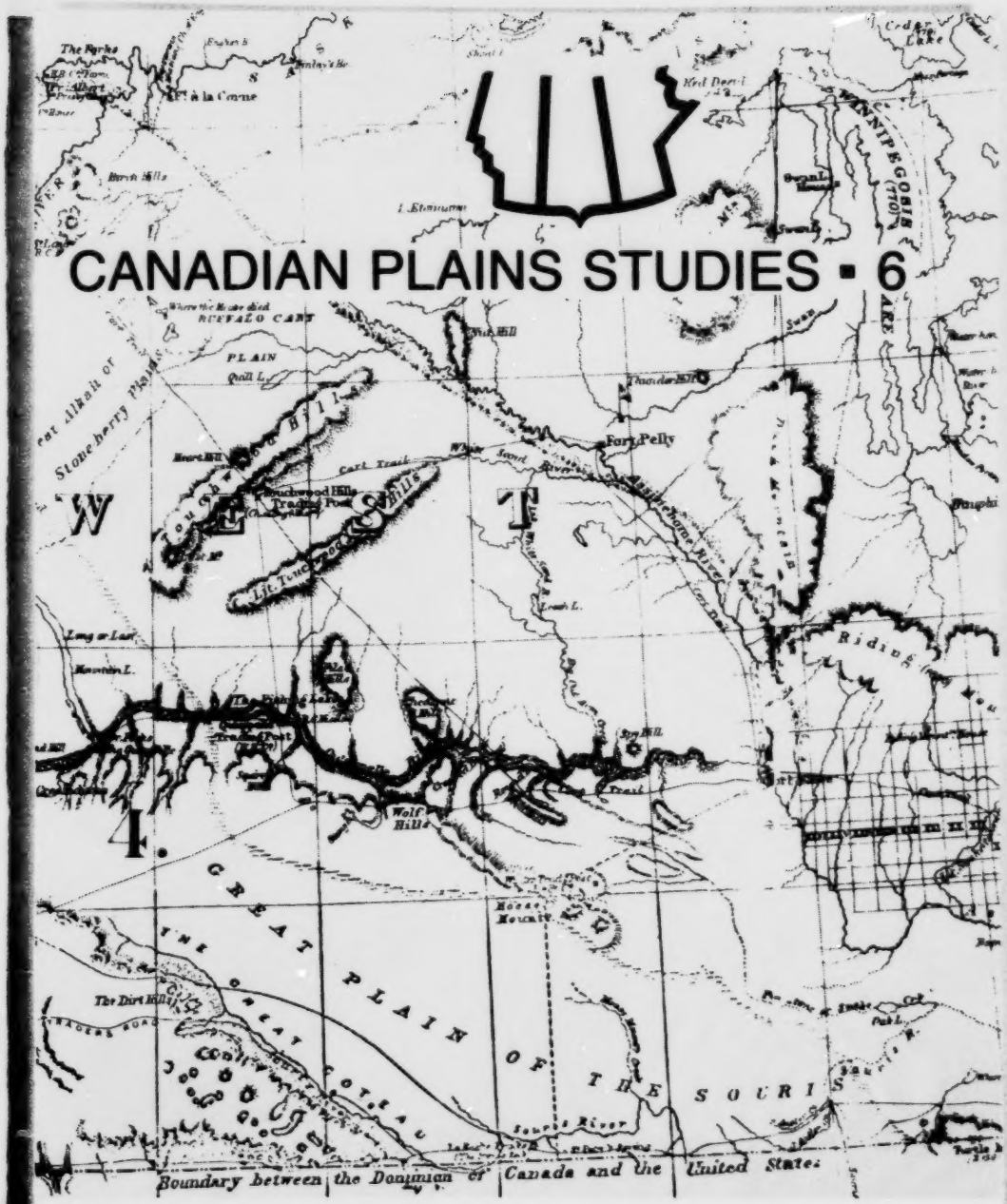
CANADIAN PLAINS STUDIES • 6
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MAN AND NATURE ON THE PRAIRIES

RICHARD ALLEN

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CANADIAN PLAINS STUDIES 6

MAN AND NATURE ON THE PRAIRIES

edited
by

RICHARD ALLEN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EARLY BRITISH IMAGES OF RUPERT'S LAND. 1
D. W. Moodie.

2. THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE COMMONS IN WESTERN CANADA. 21
Irene Spry.

3. ETHNICITY AND THE PRAIRIE ENVIRONMENT: PATTERNS OF OLD COLONY MENNONITE AND DOUKHOBOR SETTLEMENT. 46
C. J. Tracie.

4. CIRCUMFERENCE OF ABSENCE: LAND AND SPACE IN THE POETRY OF THE CANADIAN PLAINS. 66
Laurence R. Ricou.

5. MAN AND NATURE IN THE MODERN WEST: A REVOLUTION OF IMAGES. 77
Douglas John Hall.

EPILOGUE 93

PREFACE

In the late winter and spring of 1974 the Canadian Plains Studies interdisciplinary seminar turned its attention to the theme, at once elemental and highly reflective, of man and nature in the prairies. To the stimulating character of those sessions is due the fact that what was at first intended as a preface has grown into an epilogue, and this preface will largely content itself with acknowledging the indebtedness of the Center and the Editor with respect to the seminar and this volume of *Canadian Plains Studies*.

For various reasons not all presentations to the seminar were available for or amenable to publication. This volume would have been considerably enriched had Hugo Maliepaard of the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment and Gregory Morley of the University of Manitoba Agassiz Centre for Water Studies found time to develop their contributions, respectively on the philosophy and tactics of resources law as a focus of conflicting views of the prairie environment. John Bennett, author of *Northern Plainsmen*, was at the last moment unable to be present, but his paper on the characterological impact of the prairies will in any case appear in an issue of *Western Perspectives*. J. G. Nelson's presentation on nature and man on the northern plains prior to 1870 is available in his book *The Last Refuge*, and the paper by Philip Tideman of St. Cloud College, Minnesota, on ethnic diversity and perception and response to the agricultural frontier of the northern plains, 1890-1920, will be appearing in B. W. Blouet and M. P. Lawson, eds., *Image of the Plains, The Role of Human Nature in Settlement* (University of Nebraska Press). Although none of these appear below, they had a great deal to do with making this publication possible.

To those whose papers follow, our debt is obvious, but I may also owe them an apology for leaning so much of the burden of the epilogue on Laurence Ricou's paper, "The Circumference of Absence," and possibly bending all their contributions in directions they may not have anticipated — may even not appreciate. One can only plead that the view over them all suggests approaches to elements of prairie culture which none does singly, and Ricou's paper appeared to sit midway between the background sketched in the earlier papers and the Hall paper working out of the larger generalities of the question. A second apology is in order to authors and to the Center, as well, for the inordinate length of time I have taken in preparing the papers and this preface for publication. A move from Regina to Hamilton, and some anxiety about this appropriate prefatory "word," help to explain but do not excuse the delay. I would like, in the same breath, to express my appreciation of the firm but gracious pressure with which Professor L. G. Crossman got me back to my last. More than that, he has exceeded his duty as Chairman of the Center's publications board in giving the papers the benefit, in effect, of a second editor. I am also indebted to Professor Carl Berger of the University of Toronto for his

observations on the epilogue and for his warm encouragement of this and other publication projects of the Center. Needless to say, any problems remaining in the publication must be shared by myself and the several authors whose words follow this preface.

Finally the experience of the seminar, and the rereading of the following papers, lead an historian of ideas to express his gratitude for the work of cultural geographers, economic historians, ecologists, anthropologists, literary scholars and theologians, to mention only those disciplines involved in this one seminar. The readiness, even eagerness, with which members of a dozen disciplines have responded over the last seven years to the Canadian Plains Center's projects, probing the prairie experience from many perspectives within a mutual framework, has more than justified the interdisciplinary venture the University of Regina has supported so handsomely. Since the editing of this volume will bring to an end the history of my more formal involvement in the Canadian Plains Studies programme at Regina, I want to thank Dr. Bernard Zagorin, Chairman of the Department of History, and Associate Dean F. W. Anderson of the Division of Social Sciences, for their willing release of part of my time for Canadian Plains projects, and express the gratitude of the Canadian Plains Studies Committee to Principal Riddell and President Archer and their administrations for such ready backing of proposals initiated by us.

Richard Allen,
Hamilton, Ontario,
October, 1975.

1 EARLY BRITISH IMAGES OF RUPERT'S LAND

D. W. MOODIE

In the first publication of the Canadian Plains Studies, it was observed that a region is a mental construct, an idea in the minds of men.[1] It might also be said that a region is distinguished by its personality, while it is instructive to note that according to the new psychology, personality is a special or perceived version of reality. Perception, therefore, does not merely influence, but dictates personality. Although one might doubt the novelty of these statements, it does no damage to reiterate that our pictures of the world are highly selected versions of reality that are influenced, not so much by the quality of our vision, as by the visions we have in mind. Even the most tangible physical attributes of the environment are filtered by the predilections of the observer, so that even the physical personality of a region can be as much a product of the mind as of the physical processes that produced it.

This paper is concerned with the special views or images of the Hudson's Bay Company's lands that grew up in England in the course of the 18th Century. Since only slight and fragmentary information was available on the nature of these lands, there was created at this time a theoretical physical geography of the Company's interior territories. These views were not opposed by the Hudson's Bay Company and were strongly rooted in versions of reality that characterized the time. Indeed, they were well grounded in the scientific thinking of the period, so that what we would now regard as having been speculative and theoretical, if not grossly exaggerated, gained acceptance in England as geographical reality in the latter half of the 18th century.

Although the images of the time failed to distinguish the Canadian plains as a regional entity and, in fact, ignored the existence of large areas of grassland in the continental interior, they did incorporate the area in which the plains region is set. In this respect, they afford the first comprehensive view of the vast lands lying to the south and west of Hudson Bay and, for the Canadian plains, constitute the initial formulation in the minds of Englishmen of the physical attributes of the region.

On May 2nd, 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company was granted almost sovereign power over the huge area drained by the rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. This area, known as Rupert's Land, came to be but imperfectly known during the first century of its North American trade. During this century the Hudson's Bay Company was able to exploit the fur

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resources of much of Rupert's Land by trading with the Indians on the shores of Hudson Bay. Not until 1774 did the Company expand inland and, until that time, it settled only the coastal margins of the territory it had been granted.

Despite competition from the French in the interior, a small number of posts, strategically located with respect to the inland waterways, was sufficient to conduct the Company's trade. As it had from the beginning, the Company continued to rely upon the inland Indians to transport the furs to tidewater, where an annual trade was conducted at the settlements on the Bay. With the minor exception of Henley House, which was constructed in 1743 some 150 miles up the Albany River and whose main role was to encourage the Indians to trade at the maritime settlement of Albany, no attempt was made to establish inland posts in direct competition with the French.

The very success of the Company's policy, its so-called "Sleep by a Frozen Sea" as Joseph Robson was to call it, exposed the Company in the decade of the 1740's to public attack in Britain. Hostility towards the Company was focussed upon its monopoly trade and the failure of the Company, in view of its sweeping privilege, to continue the search for the North West Passage or to colonize its lands. By this time there was an awareness in Britain of the Pacific explorations of the Russians and of the possibility of developing a trade with China. With the advance of the La Vérendryes into the interior plains at the same time, it was feared that large areas of Rupert's Land would be lost to British commerce, while the Company, in the face of this increased competition from the French, contented itself with the tidewater trade on the Bay. The assault on the Company was led by Arthur Dobbs, a persistent and well meaning spokesman for the overseas expansion of British commerce. His support came mainly from powerful mercantile elements interested in freeing the trade to Hudson Bay. The result of the Dobbs controversy was a challenge to the Company's charter and a parliamentary enquiry into its affairs in 1749.

The report of the enquiry, together with several publications about this time, brought to light for the first time a great deal of information about the country in the vicinity of the Bay. For the first time as well, a considerable amount of material was assembled as to the nature of the country in the interior. Although no one had travelled any distance south from the Bay since Kelsey's journey in 1690-92, a second-hand knowledge of the geography of the interior had for some time been accumulating at the Bayside from the accounts of the inland or Upland Indians. Knowledge of this sort, including much of what had been similarly gleaned by the French on the Bay, was incorporated into the writings of men like Arthur Dobbs, Henry Ellis, Theodorus Dradge and Joseph Robson. It was also prominent in the evidence that was heard at the parliamentary enquiry in 1749, and formed the basis of the various arguments developed to assail the Company on the grounds that it had failed to colonize its lands.

Long before the Company's advance inland it was commonly held that southward and inland of the Company's settlements conditions for agriculture and settlement became progressively better and, from the earliest days on the Bay, the accounts of the Upland Crees and Assiniboines had no doubt lent credence to this idea, at least as far as climate was concerned. Not until Arthur Dobbs began to pry into the Company's affairs, however, did this topic receive much attention in England. Nor, for that matter, had it been of much concern to the Company.

THE DOBBS AFFAIR

In his growing antipathy toward the Company, Dobbs not only criticized the Company for its apparent insouciance in pursuing the search for a North West Passage, but energetically proposed that exploration be conducted along the northwest coast of Hudson Bay, where he felt certain a passage existed. In 1741 Dobbs succeeded in persuading the British Admiralty to send out an expedition for this purpose. The expedition, which was placed under the command of Captain Christopher Middleton, failed, and Middleton returned to England convinced that no such passage existed. The admiralty expedition, however, attracted a great deal of public attention and reawakened British interest in a North West Passage to the Orient. A second expedition, again engineered in part by Dobbs and sponsored by commercial interests, failed in an attempt to find a passage in 1746-47. Not only was interest in the North West Passage rekindled at this time, but for the first time the Hudson's Bay Company was put in the public eye.

The Company up to this time had successfully maintained a policy of forbidding publication of information on Hudson Bay and little, in consequence, was known about Rupert's Land or of the Company's activities there. Secrecy was one of the few stratagems that the Company could employ to protect its monopoly trade in this environmentally difficult and remote region of North America, and what information had been accumulated by the Company almost never became public knowledge. The renewed interest in the North West Passage, however, witnessed the first significant break in this wall of secrecy. Shortly after the return of the admiralty expedition, a number of publications appeared that briefly described environmental conditions along the Bay. Middleton, for example, delivered a paper to the Royal Society on the effect of cold in Hudson Bay, which contained a reasonable description of the winter climate at Churchill.[2] About the same time, letters were published by members of the expedition which briefly commented upon the country, as well as the Company's trade, in the vicinity of Churchill.[3]

Dobbs, in the meanwhile, was engaged in a lengthy correspondence with Middleton wherein he discussed his plans to oppose the Company's charter. Because of Middleton's longstanding experience as a ship's captain in the Company's employ, Dobbs asked Middleton for information

> in relation to the Climate, Coasts, Rivers, and Trade in the Bay, that I might prepare matters to attack the Company's Charter and open the Trade, which I thought would be of great advantage to Britain, by making Settlements higher up the Rivers in better Climates, and by that Means securing the Country and Trade from the French.[4]

Although he had previously afforded Dobbs a great deal of information on the Bayside, Middleton refused to co-operate further under these circumstances, which caused Dobbs to accuse him of having been bribed by the Company. In defence of his position, Middleton published *A Vindication of the Conduct of Captain Christopher Middleton* in 1743. This was followed by Dobbs's *Remarks Upon Captain Middleton's Defence* and Middleton's *Reply to the Remarks of Arthur Dobbs*. In this manner a spate of publications was launched, and the years leading up to the parliamentary enquiry, as well as those immediately following, saw a variety of books and pamphlets concerned with Hudson Bay. None of these publications, save for a single pamphlet by the Company's solicitor, was favourable to the Company, while threaded through most were partisan commentaries on the suitability of Rupert's Land for agricultural settlement.

In 1744 Arthur Dobbs published his major indictment against the Company. His book was the first devoted to the Company and its territories and comprised a powerful case for English colonization and commerce in the northern interior of the continent. The full title of the book summarizes its contents, as well as its purpose, in the developing campaign against the Company:

> *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay in the North-West Part of America: Containing a Description of their Soil and their Methods of Commerce, &c. Shewing the Benefit to be made by settling Colonies, and opening a Trade in these parts; whereby the French will be deprived in great Measure of their Traffick in Furs, and the Communication between Canada and Mississippi be cut off. The whole intended to shew the great Possibility of a North-West Passage, so long desired; and which (if discovered) would be of highest Advantage to these Kingdoms.*

Arthur Dobbs was a member of the Irish parliament and holder of a number of high offices, including that of Engineer-in-Chief and Surveyor-General of Ireland. He was also an economist and historian of repute and published occasionally on scientific matters.[5] As early as 1730, Dobbs's concern for the protection and expansion of the colonial trade in North America had led him to an interest in the Company's affairs, while it was from his studies of early voyages of discovery in Hudson Bay that he became convinced of the practical possibility of a marine passage to the Orient.

By the time he commenced writing his book on the Company's territories, Dobbs was well versed in the material available at the time, including the French accounts of Nicholas Jérémie and La Potherie and the personal testimony of Joseph La France. More important, he also obtained information from ex-servants of the Company and, through his early con-

nections with Middleton, gathered much in the way of documentary information from the Company. Although written around themes wherein the biases of the author's interests are apparent, the book was broadly based, not only upon the knowledge that was available for scholarly enquiry, but also upon much of what had been privy to the Company up until this time. Dobbs's account of the Bayside, in particular, contained a great deal of accurate and hitherto unpublished geographical information. His discussion of the interior, in contrast, contained many elements of the imaginative geography of the period. The latter comprised little more than "a congeries of various ill-defined spaces which bore various names," and derived in large part from "theorizing about the possible character of the unknown lands."[6] In the hands of a skilled writer and ardent visionary like Dobbs, these vague ideas of *terra incognita* proved most malleable, and many of his descriptions of the interior, in consequence, closely suited his designs. Nevertheless, Dobbs also put together an impressive amount of sound information on the interior and, despite the grossly speculative nature of some of its content, the book must be considered the first publication in English to present a comprehensive and unified description of the northern interior of the continent.

Dobbs's book was dedicated to the King and contained two basic stratagems which he considered to be of great potential consequence to British imperial interests on the continent. On the one hand, he proposed planting English settlers along a line of country between James Bay and Pennsylvania with the objective of cutting off the French from the West and, on the other hand, he stressed the importance of eventually achieving an overland passage to the Pacific. Both objectives, according to Dobbs, might profitably be achieved by colonization and the extension of trade into the interior.

In order to support his contentions about the viability of settlement and commerce in the interior, Dobbs dwelt at length upon environmental considerations. He depicted the physical basis for inland settlement in a most favourable light, and was especially sanguine about conditions for settlement at no great distance from the Bottom of the Bay. Dobbs's information on the country immediately inland from the Bottom of the Bay derived from the accounts of a Mr. Frost who, according to Dobbs, had resided at Churchill and Moose Factory and claimed to have travelled some distance inland from both factories. He purportedly informed Dobbs that a "Kind of wild Oats or Rice" grew naturally up the Moose River and that "upon the Southern Branch all sorts of Grain thrives, as Barley, Beans and Pease do at the Factory, tho' exposed to all the chilling Winds which comes from the Bay."[7]

From statements of this nature, Dobbs could easily assert that upstream from the Bottom of the Bay one "may have everywhere within Land all Sorts of Fruit Trees as in the same Climates in *Europe*, for what Sorts they have tried thrive very well."[8] Dobbs's discussion of the countries adjoining James Bay also included an analysis from French sources of

the settlement possibilities in the vicinity of the Great Lakes. The purpose of this elaboration was to demonstrate the feasibility of linking up future colonization from the Bottom of the Bay with that in Pennsylvania.

In addition to stressing the potential for agricultural settlement in this area, Dobbs devoted considerable attention to the country inland from York, and to that around Lake Winnipeg in particular. His focus upon this little known region related to his argument that the way to the Western Ocean lay via a river connection to the south of York and Churchill. To the extent that Dobbs's descriptions of this part of the interior derived from accounts other than those written from information communicated by Indians at the Bay, they were based primarily upon the narrative of Joseph La France. La France was a *coureur de bois* who, from 1739 to 1742, traversed the country between Sault Ste. Marie and York Factory via Lake Winnipeg and the Hayes River. He was interviewed by Dobbs in England, and the geographical information so acquired and incorporated into Dobbs's book, afforded the first published account of the Lake Winnipeg area based upon the observations of a man of European origin.

La France's journey afforded him a general awareness of the main features of this area which, according to Dobbs, he described as follows: "The Country West of the Ouinipique Lake has dry islands or Hills with marshy Bottoms full of Wood and Meadows. On the East Side is a fine flat country full of Woods, until they come to the Bottom of the Mountains, which are betwixt this and the Upper lake [i.e. Lake Superior]."[9] This was a reasonable depiction of the country between Lake Superior and the western plains and one that took cognizance of the beginning of prairie or grassland to the west of Lake Winnipeg.

As regards climate, however, the La France descriptions of the inland country were wildly inaccurate. He greatly exaggerated in claiming that "the winter there [Lake Winnipeg] was not severe, it lasted about 3 Months and a Half, the Frost breaking up in March."[10] He was also overzealous in stating that sixty leagues up Hayes River "the Climate is good, and fit to produce Grain, Pulse &c. and very good Grass and Hay for Horses and Cattle."[11]

From the La France information, as well as from that assembled by Jérémie during his residence at York Factory, Dobbs concluded that "The River *Nelson* opens a Navigation into a Country of surprizing Greatness, through many Lakes of great Extent, having many navigable Rivers running into them from Distant Countries in delightful Climates even to Lat. 46 and to Nations adjoining to the Western Ocean."[12] Moreover, just inland from the Bay in a southwesterly direction, the Climate became "as good as the Southern Part of *Poland,* and the North Part of *Germany* and *Holland;* nothing being wanted to make it so, but the building convenient Houses with stoves, such as are used in the same Climates in Europe."[13]

The picture that clearly emerged from Dobbs's discussion of the settlement potential of the interior was one of vast lands to the south and southwest of the Bay where the agricultural characteristics of the land were

akin to those of the countries of Europe in similar latitudes. This was in keeping with the widespread assumption of the time that similar latitudes were characterized by similar climates and that, in terms of climate at least, like latitudes offered equivalent possibilities for agriculture and therefore for colonization. Reasoning of this sort had previously prompted the Hudson's Bay Company to establish agriculture at York Factory and Fort Albany, the latitudes of Albany and York being roughly those of London and Edinburgh respectively. In fact, so sanguine was the Company in its expectations that commercial agriculture was attempted at Fort Albany at the close of the 17th century.[14] As late as the decade of the 1730's, moreover, the Company was exhorting its officers at Moose Factory to raise the grain and pulse required for the subsistence of the men at the factory. Although attempts to raise grain had failed elsewhere on the Bay, Moose Factory was the southernmost of the Company's Bayside settlements and, by virtue of its southerly location, was thought to offer ample potential for agricultural endeavours of this nature.[15]

These interior areas of potential colonization and agricultural settlement were depicted by Dobbs as well wooded and fertile. The ability of the soil to generate tree growth was generally accepted as a measure of its productivity, a concept which was strongly buttressed in this case by the assumed fertility of virgin soils. The same line of reasoning had further enticed the Hudson's Bay Company to invest in agriculture at its arctic and subarctic settlement on the Bay. Since, as the Company's directors believed, these soils had "layne fallow it may be from Creation," they could only conclude that "such rich mould . . . cannot Chuse but bring forth strongly."[16] That this view was strongly held was well evidenced when, in 1696, Governor Knight's failure to raise hemp for export at Fort Albany was attributed by the Company to "the richness of the Soyle."[17]

Although Dobbs described the interior as well wooded, abundantly watered and fertile, scattered throughout his book are a number of references which, when taken together, convey an impression of a zone of woodland punctuated with areas of grassland that extended across the southwestern interior. From information acquired by La France in descending the Winnipeg River, for example, Dobbs wrote that this river ran "through a fine woody Country, having many Sorts of Timber Trees of Great Bulk. On the Southwest Side, at some Distance, is a flat Country, full of Meadows."[18] From the same informant he also took note of meadow land interspersed with woodland to the west of Lake Winnipeg and, in his account of the Indians to the west, made due mention of the "*Assinibouels* of the Meadows." He further noted that "farther North a great Way, are the *Assinibouels* of the Woods."[19] Similar information is also contained in the account from Jérémie, who related that the Assiniboines inhabited a country that was "full of fine Meadows, filled with wild oxen."[20] Dobbs, however, made no attempt to separate the meadow country as a regional entity distinct from the woodland. Nor did he speculate as to its extent. The several references to "fine" meadow land together with the mention of

wild oxen, however, could only imply a landscape that was well suited for pastoral activities. Otherwise, he made no attempt to differentiate the physical characteristics of the meadow country for agriculture. The prairie-parkland vegetation region, in consequence, was not distinguished by Dobbs and remained simply an unqualified part of the vast interior zone which he portrayed as admirably suited for agriculture.

It should be observed that there is some possibility that Dobbs was in possession of the journals of Henry Kelsey when he was preparing his account of the interior. The first indisputable copies of the Kelsey papers were found among Dobbs's papers in Ireland at the beginning of this century. The historian Rich is of the opinion that Dobbs acquired the journals while Middleton was still in his confidence, and has written "That Dobbs with a copy of Kelsey's Journal in his possession should have suppressed it . . . is merely an instance of the rancour with which he challenged the Company's position."[21] Dobbs himself made no mention of Kelsey until following the parliamentary enquiry in 1749, and at no time prior to the enquiry did he indicate any knowledge of the journals. The fact remains that Dobbs did acquire the journals. If he possessed them while attacking the Company, this would say, as Professor Williams has noted, "little for his veracity and much for his unscrupulousness."[22] If Dobbs did in fact suppress all knowledge of Kelsey, it would have been greatly to his advantage to do so.

It was not in Dobbs's interest to emphasize the occurrence of grassland in the southwestern interior and therefore to accord recognition to Kelsey's journals, wherein large tracts of open grassland are described. In making a case for colonization in the interior, Dobbs would have been hard pressed to depict large treeless areas in the interior as well suited for English agricultural settlement. Living in a well watered land where the only large areas of treeless terrain were essentially non-arable, it would have been hard for the Englishman to conceive of a land which Kelsey described as affording "Nothing but short Round sticky grass" as potentially arable and fertile. Nor would it have been in Dobbs's interest to call the grassland "barren ground" as Kelsey had done, since this term in the usage of the day would have called up an image of infertile, sterile or unproductive land. More important in this matter was the fact that Dobbs had been building his case against the Company upon its failure to engage in exploration. It would have therefore been greatly to his advantage to conceal from the public this singular feat of Hudson's Bay Company exploration into the interior via the Nelson-Hayes system, or precisely in the direction that Dobbs proposed would lead to an overland passage to the Pacific.

Dobbs's book was followed by others that offered opinion on the nature of the Company's inland territories. Although there was none to rival Dobbs in scope or documentation, all presented a distorted or overly optimistic picture of the agricultural resource. Prior to the parliamentary enquiry, the only notable publication in this respect was Henry Ellis's *A*

Voyage to Hudson's-Bay published in 1748. Ellis had sailed with the 1746-47 expedition for discovering the North West Passage and was one of Dobbs's supporters. Like Dobbs, he was highly critical of the Company's failure to settle the country and exaggerated the environmental possibilities of doing so. In this connection, Ellis wrote primarily about the resource potential of the Bayside, which he magnified considerably, concluding that "the Country is much more fruitful farther within Land." He also stated that the climate only thirty leagues inland could "justly be stiled temperate."[23]

Thus, on the eve of the parliamentary enquiry, there appeared in England for the first time published opinions on the nature of the Company's inland territories. Although they contained much in the way of speculative exaggeration, especially as regards the agricultural potential, at no time did the Company, or those who defended its policies, attempt to refute the idea that conditions for settlement, and especially climate, improved inland. In reply to Henry Ellis's comments on the climate inland, for example, James Isham, the Governor at York, simply informed the Governor and the Committee that "I shall agree with the Author so fair that the climate may be more temperate thirty leagues up."[24] Although there were men like Isham who were annoyed by these publications, and who even saw fit to pen their opposition to the Committee, the Company took no step to answer the publications of its critics.

Although there were no publications prior to the parliamentary enquiry that defended the Company, Middleton had at least opined that the immediate environs of the Bay were too cold for normal settlement and colonization, and that navigation difficulties would hamper attempts to colonize the interior. He had also produced a well received study on the winter climate at Churchill. In a report submitted to the Admiralty, just as in his prize-winning paper read to the Royal Society, Middleton remarked that "It is not a little surprizing to many that such extreme cold could be felt in these parts of America more than in the same latitude on the coast of Norway."[25]

Middleton, who had wintered at both Churchill and Trondheim, correctly attributed the milder conditions in Norway to the prevailing winds from the Atlantic. The colder conditions at Churchill, on the other hand, were "occasioned by wind blowing constantly . . . for seven months in the twelve, between the N.E. and N.W., and passing over a large tract of land and exceeding high mountains."[26] He was not so correct, however, in claiming that "The northerly winds being so extreme cold is owing to the neighbourhood of high mountains, whose tops are perpetually covered with snow, which exceedingly chills the air passing over them."[27] This misconception notwithstanding, Middleton appears to have been the first to offer a reasonably convincing explanation for the apparent differences between winter temperatures near the Bay and winter temperatures in corresponding European latitudes.

Dobbs's book, it should be noted, appeared two years after Middleton's paper was published. Rather than contradict Middleton, whose views cast serious doubts upon the validity of comparing the climatic characteristics of the Company's territories with those in Europe at similar latitudes, Dobbs elected to elaborate upon Middleton's position by maintaining that the temperature conditions on the Bayside were anomalous in summer as well. Just as Middleton had pointed to cold winds from the interior to explain the extreme winters, Dobbs looked to the chilling winds from the Bay to account for the relatively cold summers. He also maintained that this effect was limited to the immediate environs of the coast and supported his contention with a variety of first-hand observations. Thus, his book contained the most up-to-date and comprehensive account of the climate of the Company's territories, and was based throughout upon the accepted thinking of the time.

There was one other publication at this time that had a significant contribution to make to the discussion on the settlement potential of the Company's lands. This was the chapter on the history of Hudson Bay in John Oldmixon's *The British Empire in America*, published in 1708 and again in 1741. Oldmixon's account, which begins with the earliest voyages into the region and terminates in 1706, was heavily based upon Company records and, as the 1741 edition was little altered from that in 1708, it offered essentially non-partisan views on the Bayside physical environment as well as its agricultural worth.

Oldmixon's book was in some respects similar to Dobbs's, for it was written "to show the character and great natural resources of the American Colonies, and the advantage that they would be to England."[28] In this context, he had nothing but ill to say of Rupert's Land, remarking that he was loath to let his "History open with the Description of so miserable a Wilderness, and so wretched a Colony."[29] Oldmixon described the Bayside as possessed of a "barbarous climate." He had learned of the Company's early plans to plant a colony on Charlton Island and of subsequent attempts by the Committtee to relieve provisions costs by raising food at the factories. However, he considered these endeavours to be "chimerical and impracticable," and pointed out that, despite the latitudes of the settlements, the climate was "so cold and frosty that it kills almost all sorts of Roots in the Ground which are sown there."[30] He further noted that "The Air even at the Bottom of the Bay, tho' by the Latitude 'tis nearer the Sun than *London*, . . . is excessive cold for 9 months,"[31] but unlike Middleton, he offered no explanation for this exceptionalist claim. Oldmixon also wrote that the Bayside soils would bear no manner of grain and that the environment generally was so cold and inimical to settlement that it allowed even the Bayside Indians only a most hazardous existence.

Although the 1741 edition of *The British Empire in America* was timely in terms of the growing controversy about the Company's lands, Oldmixon's views were not incorporated into the public debate. Possibly this was because his work remained obscure *vis-à-vis* the other publica-

tions, which were associated directly with the popular free trade movement and public interest in the North West Passage. Even more likely, perhaps, this was owing to the Company's failure to defend itself publicly and to the circumstance that many of Oldmixon's opinions were not in accord with those of the Company's critics.

The remaining body of geographical information available on Rupert's Land at this time was more than a century old and concerned the reports of early mariners such as Button, Munck, Foxe, and James. Although the marine environment of the Bay was generally depicted as cold and hostile, no clear-cut picture of the Bayside resource potential emerged from these accounts. Some of these men suffered horribly at the hands of the elements in the Bay region, but they did not always describe the coastlands in unfavourable terms. Of the partly barren coast north of Churchill, for example, Captain Luke Foxe wrote the following in the summer of 1631:

> August 6: This land was gentlie descending down to the Seaside, the greenest & best like I have seen since I came out of the river of *Thames*, and as it were inclosed with thick rowes of Trees betweene one meadowe and another, distinct as it were *Barne Elmes*, nere *London*, and at sight hereof I did think of them; and if there be any keeping of tame Deere or other beasts, or tillage, I should think it to be there.[32]

With Oldmixon in large degree excepted, the books published on Hudson Bay prior to the parliamentary enquiry in 1749 conveyed a generally distorted picture of the agricultural characteristics of the Company's lands. As much of their information derived directly or indirectly from observations in Rupert's Land, they also contained much that was circumstantial and accurate. For this reason, the different publications, and especially that by Dobbs, appeared more authoritative than they were in fact. Because of the Company's prohibition on publication, moreover, little was known about Hudson Bay save for what the Company's opponents had seen fit to publish, or what had been learned of the Company's entanglements in warfare and politics there. As a result, the blend of distortion and accurate reporting that characterized most of the published comment, and that on agriculture in particular, stood virtually unopposed in England on the eve of the parliamentary enquiry.

THE PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY OF 1749

The parliamentary investigation, which was initiated by petitioners seeking to free the trade to Hudson Bay, was conducted in the first stage by a committee of the House of Commons. The Committee was charged

> to enquire into the State and Conditions of the Countries adjoining to Hudson's Bay, and of the trade carried on there; and to consider how these countries may be settled and improved, and the Trade and Fisheries there extended and increased; and also to enquire into the Right the Company of Adventurers trading to Hudson's Bay pretend to have, by Charter, to the Property of Lands, and exclusive Trade of those countries.[33]

The unfavourable impression of the Company created by the publications of its opponents prior to the parliamentary enquiry was further heightened by the Company's failure to send witnesses before the investigating committee when it convened in 1749. Oddly enough, this was the Company's intent, for in this manner the Company sought to avoid "any possible breach of commercial security by its own servants before inquisitive M.P.s."[34] Having secured the right to be subsequently heard before the House of Commons, the Company joined the issue at this stage by submitting to each M.P. a brief published statement. Prepared by the Company's solicitor and entitled *The Case of the Hudson's-Bay Company*, the pamphlet emphasized the Company's difficulties in prosecuting its overseas trade. It succinctly reviewed the record of exploration and offered reasons for tidewater trading despite the French activity in the interior. It also contained a very brief, but strong, repudiation of the possibility of colonization in the Bayside environment. No mention, however, was made of the Company's agricultural endeavours on the Bay, nor did the Company comment upon the nature of the interior, about which it was essentially ignorant.

Whatever its effect upon the M.P.s, the Company's pamphlet had no impact upon the testimony heard before the parliamentary committee. Of the twenty-two witnesses questioned, fifteen were ex-servants of the Company and largely hostile toward their former employer. Six were merchants, of whom five were involved in the free trade movement, and the remaining witness was Arthur Dobbs. Those who gave evidence, in consequence, were largely partisan and, because of the Company's image at the time, felt free to exaggerate. As a result, bias and overstatement characterized much of the evidence on agriculture at the enquiry. The questions put by the committee centred upon the resources of Rupert's Land, and especially its mineral and settlement potential; in consequence, the report dealt mainly with speculation as to the nature of the interior.

With the exception of the La France narrative and the extracts from one of Kelsey's journals submitted by the Company, the testimony was concerned with the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Some of the ex-servants of the Company who testified before the committee possessed first-hand knowledge of the Albany valley as far inland as Henley House. Otherwise, only the Bayside fringes of the Hudson Bay Lowlands had been seen by the witnesses. The testimony regarding the agricultural potential of this region, therefore, was based upon very limited experience and most of it was wide of the mark.

To the extent that these opinions did not derive from malice toward the Company, they rested upon misconceptions of the climate. Although perceptibly milder than the exposed coastlands of the Bay, even the most interior parts of the Hudson Bay Lowland are everywhere subarctic in character. The idea that the climate, as well as the soil, was well suited for cereal cultivation perhaps related to the noticeably better stands of timber along the well drained banks of the rivers, to which the movements of the

Company's servants were in large degree confined. As a result, the low lying and ill-drained northern fringes of the boreal forest that bordered on the Bottom of the Bay, and the south coast lowland in particular, emerged from the enquiry as well suited for agricultural settlement and cereal cultivation. This view, although established by parties hostile to the Company, was not opposed by the Company — for the Company itself was essentially ignorant of the country in question.

The only information at the enquiry bearing upon the country inland from the Hudson Bay Lowlands was that submitted from Kelsey and La France. In the later stages of the parliamentary enquiry, suspicion was cast upon the La France narrative because of adverse testimony concerning, not only La France's character, but also the contents of his account. The contents of Kelsey's journal, in contrast, did not enter into the discussions at the enquiry. The extracts concerned only the country inland from the Saskatchewan River, and contained none of the journal descriptions relating to the intervening areas of the Hudson Bay Lowlands and the Canadian Shield that Kelsey had traversed. From the material submitted, moreover, it would have been impossible to determine with any accuracy where Kelsey's travels had taken him. It should also be observed that Kelsey reported no evidence of agriculture in the interior, nor did he offer any opinion on the agricultural possibilities of the areas through which he passed. Moreover, when the Company's witnesses subsequently appeared before parliament, none chose to comment or speculate upon environmental conditions in the interior, so that in the end only the voices of the Company's critics were heard on the settlement potential of the interior.

Despite the unopposed view in parliament that the countries immediately inland from the Bay were suitable for agricultural settlement, the Company was vindicated by the British Government in its policy of sleeping by the Bay. The Government had no interest in establishing agricultural colonies in areas that might involve them in conflict with the French. Moreover, there was no guarantee that imperial interests would be better served by freeing the trade to the Bay. Although a motion was passed in the House to test the Company's charter in the courts, it was defeated by a sizeable majority and the Company's case was dropped. The views of most M.P.s, in Williams's opinion, were probably best summarized in a newspaper report which commented that "as it appeared to be impossible to preserve this trade without forts and settlements on the coast of Hudson's Bay, and as such forts and settlements must be supported either by exclusive companies, or at the publick expence, the affair was dropt."[35]

OPINIONS OF RUPERT'S LAND IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY

Despite the verdict of parliament, opposition to the Company did not die down immediately following the public enquiry. In 1752 a petition against the Company was launched by London merchants and hatters.

Arthur Dobbs was again involved in this attack upon the Company, but the petition was rejected by the House of Commons.

The year 1752 also saw the publication of Joseph Robson's *Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's-Bay*. Robson's book was of great significance, for it was the first book on the Company's territories based upon lengthy personal experience in the Company's employ. A former surveyor and supervisor of buildings for the Company, Robson was highly critical of the Company on a number of matters, including the Company's trading practices and allegedly cruel treatment of Company servants by their officers on the Bay. The main objective of the book, however, was to show "the absolute Necessity of Laying open the Trade" because of "The vast Importance of the Countries about Hudson's-Bay to Great-Britain, on account of the extensive Improvements that may be made there in many beneficial Articles of Commerce."[36]

Robson's book was well received by his contemporaries, but as recent research has shown, the book was instigated, and largely written, not by Robson, but by the indefatigable Arthur Dobbs.[37] In contrast to the book by Dobbs, the emphasis on agriculture in Robson's account was more clearly upon the Bayside and its more immediate environs. Although he assigned no geographical boundaries to his comments about the interior, Robson asserted that he had confirmed the following information during his residence on the Bay:

> That there are fine improveable lands up the rivers in the Bay; and no British settlements, or colonies, made or attempted there. That it is very practicable to navigate the rivers and lakes, and settle colonies upon them, which might be comfortably subsisted by tillage and pasturage, to the great improvement of the trade of the country, and the consumption of British manufactures.[38]

To establish that the climate of Rupert's Land was suitable for this kind of settlement, Robson resorted to a well drawn comparison between the Company's lands and those in Siberia. He prefaced his argument with the remark that the opinions of Rupert's Land that had been fostered by the Company were similar to the views that had once been held regarding Siberia. However, he observed that Siberia now "begins to be better known than the most cultivated parts of Russia were a century ago," and "is found to be watered with large navigable rivers, to have spacious and fertile plains, and many rich mines."[39]

Robson then proceeded to maintain in a fairly accurate manner that Siberia, whose treasures had greatly expanded the power of the Russian Empire, lay parallel in latitude to the more northerly parts of Hudson Bay. Implicit in this comment was the idea that the more southerly parts of the Company's lands were much better suited for settlement than Siberia. He further maintained that, by virtue of its situation, the climate was colder in Siberia than in the western regions of Rupert's Land. Siberia, he observed, was located in

> the center of a much larger continent, [and] is several degrees

> colder than the countries westward of the Bay; for the farther easterly all northern countries are, they are proportionably colder, from the prevailing westerly winds, in the higher latitudes, crossing over large tracts of land covered with snow, whilst the winds which come from the ocean and open sea, are milder and more temperate.[40]

This was sound climatological reasoning, and illustrates the ingenious manner in which Robson and Dobbs were capable of using Middleton's comments on the climatological effect of winds to elaborate their arguments for agricultural settlement in the interior.

The ideas regarding the relative dimensions of the northern portions of the continents of Asia and North America, moreover, constituted reasonably accurate versions of what is obvious knowledge today. They were even closer in accord with the accepted opinion of the time. The imaginary geography of the period favoured a much narrower North American continent than was in fact the case, while a variety of illusive seas were postulated to exist at no great distance to the west of the known lands. All of these ideas could only enhance, rather than detract from, Robson's version of the climate to the west of Hudson Bay.

These ideas, and especially those relating to the climate of the interior, were undoubtedly developed by Dobbs. As early as 1731 Dobbs had produced a manuscript which has been described as "one of the most coherent and persuasive statements of the case for a Northwest Passage."[41] Using the observations of Foxe and other mariners, Dobbs adduced strong evidence for the existence of an ice-free passage between the northwest main of Hudson's Bay and a nearby Western Ocean. This also enabled Dobbs to assert that the Pacific Coast of North America trended in a northeasterly direction, and in 1747 he disputed Russian evidence to the contrary in a letter published by the Royal Society and entitled "The Distances Between Asia and America." These were the ideas that afforded the basis for the climatological theorizing on western Rupert's Land in Robson's book. It might be noted that controversy over the Russian discoveries persisted until Cook's 1778 voyage along the northwest coast of North America.

Dobbs's description of the climate of western Rupert's Land was based upon a synthesis of climatic theories that was considerably advanced for his time. The relationships between temperature and latitude, as modified by the distributions of continents, oceans and prevailing winds, was not explored systematically until the early years of the next century. The first systematic clarification of these relationships has been attributed to Alexander von Humboldt who, in a paper of 1817, examined the relations between "isothermal parallels" and geographical latitude. Humboldt had been impressed with the distinctly milder climate in northern latitudes of the west coast of North America compared to the east, and produced a map of the continents illustrating this effect in the zone of prevailing westerlies. Dobbs, of course, had underestimated the western extent of North America and knew nothing of the Cordilleran barrier to westerly air

movements. Still, his descriptions of the climate west and south of the Bay were deduced from valid climatological premises, which permitted Robson with some authority to summarize conditions in the interior as follows:

> that the lands southward and westward of the Bay, are in good climates, equal in their several latitudes to those in Asia and Europe, and that the climate improves farther within land, the spring being earlier and the winter shorter; that by Kelsey's journal produced by the Company, and by Joseph de la France's which they have not controverted,the country abounds with woods, champains, plains, ponds, rivers and lakes, several hundred leagues west from the Bay. . . .[42]

This singular reference to Kelsey in connection with the character of the interior is interesting, especially as Robson devoted an entire section of his book to discrediting the Company's role in Kelsey's explorations. Claiming evidence from oral traditions at York Factory, Robson denied that Kelsey's journey had been authorized by the Company. According to Robson, Kelsey had run away from mistreatment at York Factory and, while in the interior, communicated with the Governor of the factory. It was at this point, in Robson's view, that Governor Geyer asked Kelsey to contact the more distant Indian nations and promised to allow Kelsey to return in good standing if he undertook the task. At no time, however, did Robson impugn Kelsey or cast doubt upon his inland travels. This interpretation enabled Dobbs to write anonymously in Robson's book "that if Kelsey had indeed kept full journals, then 'the Company have thought proper to suppress them, lest the making public such authentic testimonials of a temperate climate, fertile soil, and a trade capable of vast extension, should bring too severe a reprimand upon the present management.' "[43]

Thus, the Robson book was an outgrowth and logical extension of that produced some eight years earlier by Arthur Dobbs. This, as well as the fact that the contents of the second in no way contradicted but built upon those of the first, can be attributed to Dobbs. Both books, moreover, were in accord with the most advanced geographical concepts of the time, while the Robson book carried with it the authority of the first account based upon sustained personal experience on the Bay.

Opposition and hostility toward the Company, as well as public interest in its affairs, declined following the publication of Robson's book in 1752. All attempts to break the Company's monopoly had failed and, with the appointment of Arthur Dobbs as governor of North Carolina in 1754, the opponents of the Company lost their main protagonist. However, the Dobbs-Robson version of the agricultural potential of Rupert's Land remained unchallenged and largely accepted in England. In the *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* published in England in 1751-54, and again in 1774, for example, the descriptions of the Company's territories were taken almost entirely from Dobbs and Robson. The author, Malachy Postlethwayt, took some of his information from Middleton and Oldmixon, but stressed the accounts of Dobbs and Robson as most reliable.[44]

In 1769, a much less authoritative and considerably more prejudicial account of the climate and agricultural potential of the Bayside appeared in a book entitled *The American Traveller*. The author, Alexander Cluny, was a London wharfinger and one time seaman in the Company's employ who had wintered at Churchill in 1744-45. In the section of his book devoted to Hudson Bay, Cluny was scathingly critical of the Company and its monopoly trade. The climate of Hudson Bay, according to Cluny, afforded no obstacle to planting English colonies, a desideratum which he depicted as potentially of much greater advantage to the Crown than the Company's monopoly trade in furs. His argument for a viable colonial agriculture, in contrast to Dobbs's, was crudely analogical.[45]

There was one other publication at this time which, although not directly concerned with agriculture and settlement, contributed to the limited literature on the character of Rupert's Land. This was a paper delivered to the Royal Society by William Wales in 1769. Wales was an astronomer whom the Company, at the request of the Royal Society, permitted to observe the transit of the planet Venus from Churchill in 1768-69. In his paper, Wales included comments upon the soils and agriculture at Churchill. He was critical of the soils in the vicinity of the settlement, but, having seen oats in one of the Company's gardens, remarked that "with proper culture" oats could be raised at Churchill "to some tolerable degree of perfection."[46] Thus, the observations on gardening at Churchill by a scientist and Fellow of the Royal Society attested to an agricultural potential in Rupert's Land that surpassed even the most sanguine statements on this subject by Joseph Robson and Arthur Dobbs!

It is relevant to observe that, just as the century-long period of Bayside trading was drawing to a close, the Company took its first steps toward abandoning its policy of absolute secrecy. In addition to accommodating the Royal Society on matters of astronomy, the Company also responded to requests for zoological specimens from the Bayside and, in the 1770's, co-operated with the Royal Society by affording limited meteorological data from some of its Bayside posts.

Otherwise, the Company remained almost as secretive and enigmatic as had been its tradition. It maintained its policy of circumspection on environmental and related matters and, until near the turn of the century, the report of the parliamentary enquiry and the books by Dobbs and Robson afforded virtually all that was known on these subjects. Not until 1790, when Edward Umfreville published his *The Present State of Hudson's Bay*, was there a significant addition to this literature. Umfreville, who had lived on the Bayside and travelled widely in the interior, described the conditions for agriculture at the Bayside settlements and in the country in the vicinity of the Saskatchewan River, and was especially positive about the latter. He also launched a number of attacks upon the Company, including the charge that the Company was withholding information on the North West Passage.

In many ways Umfreville's book was reminiscent of the beginning of the Dobbs affair and undoubtedly influenced the Company's decision to permit Hearne to publish an account of his journey to the Arctic Ocean, which appeared in 1795. Although published to demonstrate the Company's effectiveness in exploration, Hearne's account was the first in favour of the Company to challenge previous publications on Rupert's Land, and those of Dobbs, Ellis, Dradge, Robson, Cluny, and Umfreville in particular. In the tradition of the Company, however, Hearne refrained from discussing agricultural matters. He simply discredited the contents of the different books and accused their authors of advancing "such notorious absurdities, that none except those who are already prejudiced against the Company can give them credit."[47] Of Robson's book, for example, he wrote the following:

> Robson, from his six year's residence in Hudson's Bay and in the Company's service, might naturally have been supposed to know something of the climate and soil immediately around the Factories at which he resided; but the whole of his book is evidently written with prejudice, and dictated by a spirit of revenge, because his romantic and inconsistent schemes were rejected by the Company. Besides, it is well known that Robson was no more than a tool in the hands of Mr. Dobbs.[48]

For all their faults, the books thus summarily dismissed by Samuel Hearne contained most of what was known in England about the colony of Rupert's Land. Following more than a century of uninterrupted settlement and trade, they also offered almost all that could be learned of its potential for agriculture and colonization. With the exception of the information gathered by the French in their drive from Lake Superior into the Western plains, the only other knowledge that had been acquired of the lands beyond the Bay was privy to the servants of the Company, or lay unheeded and inaccessible in its London offices on Fenchurch Street.

Although the vastness of Rupert's Land was early appreciated, its potential for settlement was for long but imperfectly known, or so we might conclude from our present vantage in time. We must remember, however, that a region is a mental construct, an idea in the minds of men, and for Arthur Dobbs, Rupert's Land was indeed a mental construct, a region to be etched on the minds of men. The image of Rupert's Land which Dobbs in large part created rested in the suppositions of the time and, as such, satisfied what was felt to be most true. Since truth, like perception, depends upon presupposition, it cannot be defined absolutely. One can only say that it is a statement which satisfies the demands of a particular time or place. To the Englishman of the latter half of the eighteenth century, Dobbs's depiction of Rupert's Land as a region was true, for it satisfied both the time and the place. Only toward the end of the eighteenth century, in consequence, did Rupert's Land again come to be but imperfectly known.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Richard Allen, ed., *A Region of the Mind, Interpreting the Canadian Plains*, Canadian Plains Studies No. 1, Canadian Plains Studies Centre (Regina, 1973), p. ix.
[2]Christopher Middleton, "The Effect of Cold; together with Observations of the Longitude, Latitude, and Declination of the Magnetic Needle, at Prince of Wales' Fort, upon Churchill-River in Hudson's Bay, North America, by Capt. Christopher Middleton, F.R.S., Commander of His Majesty's Ship Furnace, 1841-42," Royal Society of London, *Philosophical Transactions*, Vol. XXXIII, 1742, pp. 157-71.
[3]See, for example, J. L. [John Lanrick], "From on Board his Majesty's Ship the Furnace in Churchill River, North America, June 21, 1742," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XII, 1742, p. 56.
[4]Arthur Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay in the North-West Part of America* (London, 1744), p. 105.
[5]In 1729-31 Dobbs published a two-volume work entitled *Essay on Irish Trade*, of which one writer says, "In his comments on trade and commerce generally, Dobbs was many years in advance of his time and antedated Adam Smith by more than forty years, a fact which in itself should place him high on the list of eighteenth century economists." By 1730 Dobbs had also produced several papers on scientific matters for the Royal Society. See Desmond Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs Esquire, 1689-1765, Surveyor-General of Ireland, Prospector and Governor of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1957), pp. 30, 31, 222.
[6]Richard I. Ruggles, "The West of Canada in 1763: Imagination and Reality," *The Canadian Geographer*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 235.
[7]Dobbs, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.
[8]*Ibid.*, p. 47.
[9]*Ibid.*, p. 35.
[10]*Loc. cit.*
[11]*Ibid.*, p. 43.
[12]*Ibid.*, p. 59.
[13]*Ibid.*, p. 2.
[14]The London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company was particularly interested in raising flax and hemp for export. See "the General Lettr. to Govr. Knight & the rest of his Councell at Albany Fort, Gravesend the 30th May 1696," in E. E. Rich, ed., *Hudson's Bay Copy Booke of Letters Commissions Instructions Outward 1688-1696* (London, 1957), p. 272.
[15]D. W. Moodie, "An Historical Geography of Agricultural Patterns and Resource Appraisals in Rupert's Land, 1670-1774" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1972), p. 303.
[16]"Governor and Committee to Governr. Knight & the Rest of Councell, London the 17 June 1693," in Rich, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[17]"General Lettr. to Govr. Knight & the Rest of his Councell at Albany Fort, Gravesend the 30th May 1696," in Rich, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
[18]Dobbs, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
[19]*Ibid.*, p. 16.
[20]*Ibid.*, p. 30.
[21]E. E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto, 1967), p. 111.
[22]Glyndwr Williams, "Highlights of the First 200 Years of the Hudson's Bay Company," *The Beaver*, Outfit 301, Autumn, 1970, p. 22.
[23]Henry Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's Bay by the Dobbs Galley and California; in the Years 1746 and 1747, for Discovering a North West Passage* (London, 1748), pp. 152, 170.
[24]James Isham in E. E. Rich, ed., *James Isham's Observations on Hudsons Bay* (Toronto, 1949), p. 206.
[25]Middleton, *op. cit.*, in John Barrow, ed., *The Geography of Hudson's Bay: Being the Remarks of Captain W. Coats in many Voyages to that Locality between the Years 1727 and 1752* (London, 1852), p. 135.
[26]*Loc. cit.*
[27]*Ibid.*, p. 134.
[28]John Oldmixon in the preface to the second edition of *The British Empire in America*, quoted by J. B. Tyrrell, ed., *Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson Bay* (Toronto, 1931), p. xiv.
[29]*Ibid.*, p. 373.
[30]*Ibid.*, p. 400.
[31]*Ibid.*, p. 380.
[32]Captain Luke Foxe, quoted in John Warkentin, *The Western Interior of Canada* (Toronto, 1964), p. 14.
[33]United Kingdom, *Report from the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the State and Conditions of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay and of the Trade Carried on There* (London, 1749), p. 215.

[34]Glyndwr Williams, "The Hudson's Bay Company and its Critics in the Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, Vol. 20, 1970, pp. 160-61.
[35]*Ibid.*, p. 163.
[36]Joseph Robson, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's-Bay, From 1733 to 1736, and 1744 to 1747* (London, 1752), title page.
[37]Glyndwr Williams, "Arthur Dobbs and Joseph Robson: New Light on the Relationship between Two Early Critics of the Hudson's Bay Company," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XL, 1959, pp. 132-36.
[38]Joseph Robson, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[39]*Ibid.*, p. 5.
[40]*Loc. cit.*
[41]*Glyndwr Williams, The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1962), p. 31.
[42]Joseph Robson, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.
[43]Arthur Dobbs, quoted in Glyndwr Williams, "Highlights of the First 200 Years of the Hudson's Bay Company," *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[44]Malachy Postlethwayt, "Hudson's Streights and Bay," in *The universal dictionary of trade and commerce Translated from the French of the celebrated Monsieur Savany . . . with large additions by Malachy Postlethwayt* (London, 1751-55), Vol. 1, pp. 957-61.
[45]Alexander Cluny, *The American Traveller* (London, 1769, reprinted by William Abbot, Tarrytown, N.Y., 1930), in the *Magazine of History*, Vol. 41, 1931, p. 26.
[46]William Wales, "Journal of a Voyage made by order of the Royal Society," Royal Society of London *Philosophical Transactions*, Vol. LX, 1769, p. 129.
[47]Samuel Hearne in Richard Glover, ed., *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772* (Toronto, 1958), p. lviii.
[48]*Loc. cit.*

2 THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE COMMONS IN WESTERN CANADA

IRENE SPRY

This is an account of the transition in Western Canada from common property resources, to open access resources, and finally to private property. In essentials, it is a story of the tragedy of the disappearance of the commons on the prairies after 1870.

When in 1870 Rupert's Land and the Indian Territories were transferred to Canada, nearly all the inhabitants (apart from the people of Red River Settlement) were wandering bands of Indians and groups of Métis hunters. The few settled communities consisted of fur trade personnel at the scattered Hudson's Bay Company posts; a handful of mission-based settlements, notably White Horse Plain (St. François Xavier) and other communities on the Assiniboine River as far West as Portage la Prairie; Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert, near Edmonton; Isle-à-la-Crosse; Lac la Biche; White Fish Lake; Victoria (later Pakan); and, lower down the North Saskatchewan, Prince Albert. As well there were two or three semi-permanent clusters of cabins at Tail Creek on the Red Deer River; in the Qu'Appelle Valley; and in the Cypress Hills; and, perhaps, at the forks of the Red Deer River and the South Saskatchewan. Even the inhabitants of such settlements spent much of their lives travelling in pursuit of buffalo or as tripmen and freighters.

Most of the population depended for its basic subsistence on the natural products of the country over which they roamed and hunted. Those products were open to use by the Indian bands that claimed the territory as their hunting grounds and by anyone else who could gain access to that territory.

Tribal boundaries were by no means rigid.[1] They shifted as the strength of one tribe or another waxed or waned with greater or less effective access to European technology, and as pressures of population shifted — for example, when epidemics took devastating toll. There seem, however, to have been, at any one time, well recognized boundaries, separated in some cases by "neutral zones" into which few but war parties ventured to go and which became effective wildlife reserves.[2]

Within their own hunting grounds each tribe lived off the land, using space, shelter, water, game, fish, timber, and wild plants in accordance with customary patterns, well understood and respected by the members of the tribe. Decisions by band councils and enforecment by tribal authority, such as the "soldiers" of the Blackfoot Confederacy and other tribes, regulated individual activity and provided the necessary organization for

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communal hunting efforts, especially the use of buffalo pounds and concerted running of buffalo herds in the plains hunt.[3] The rules of the hunt were strictly observed. They included restrictions on hunting in the calving season and the take of "parchment" hides, as well as rules that prevented an individual getting an advantage in the hunt at the expense of others.[4] Game was the common property of all and everyone had a chance to share in this gift of nature. This common use of natural riches was reinforced by the tradition that the stronger and more skilful or or more fortunate shared their plenty with those in need.

To some extent recognized tribal boundaries protected and preserved resources within them for the use of each tribe, but the exclusion of outsiders, though it seems to have provided a basis for the pattern of economic organization, was by no means absolute. Friendly tribes on occasion hunted in each other's territories and friendly travellers and traders were allowed to move about the country using space, wood, water, game and fish as need arose. Enemies could not always be kept out of the territory claimed by a tribe.[5] The great Métis buffalo hunt, notably, organized with military precision, penetrated, season after season, into hostile Sioux territory in search of migrant herds. Besides the powerful Métis, less formidable groups, such as the Kootenay, who had been pushed across the Rocky Mountains by their foes, and the Mountain Stonies, made annual forays out on to the buffalo plains to hunt in Blackfoot territory, despite the ever present danger of attack by their enemies should they be discovered. The plains tribes, too, made long journeys often beyond the limits of the tribal territories.

Islands among these tribal hunting ranges, the Hudson's Bay Company had established tentative and fragmentary claims to property in land within the pickets about its posts, to fenced and planted fields around them, and to pastures in the Company's "horse-guards." The fields were often trampled, horses on occasion stolen from the horse-guards, and a post left empty, torn down by a people who had no notion of exclusive and permanent property rights in land or the other gifts of the Great Spirit.

These free gifts, all had a right to use on their tribal lands, while outsiders who could gain access to those lands by friendship or by force might also use the riches that they offered. Indian, Métis, missionary, and traveller could and did pitch their camps or build their cabins wherever they saw fit outside the range of raids by hostile groups. They took water from any lake or stream they came upon for themselves and their horses. They cut wood for fuel, for lodge poles, for cabin logs, or for Red River carts from the bluffs out on the plains, from the trees along the waterways, from the "edge of the woods," where plain and forest met, and from the Cypress Hills. Berries and edible roots were free for the picking and digging. Fish swarmed in the lakes and rivers where anyone might catch them. Fur-bearing animals, especially beaver, muskrat, and rabbit, and, in season, wildfowl and their eggs were plentiful. Most important of all, vast herds of buffalo and other game were available, within the disciplines of

Indian customs, communal authority, and, in the case of both Indians and Métis, the regulations that governed the buffalo hunt, to any hunter capable of making a kill.

The prosperity of the native peoples depended, therefore, basically on the size and richness of the area to which they had access. This, in turn, depended on their prowess in war. Prosperity depended also on the people's knowledge of the country and on their skill, endurance and pertinacity as travellers, hunters, fishermen, and foragers. Such knowledge was the first essential — knowledge of the whereabouts of water sources and of sheltered camping places, with access to a supply of wood; knowledge of localities where roots, berries, or wild rice might be looked for; knowledge of the habits and haunts of the buffalo, moose, and other game; or of fish and wildfowl. Skill was needed as well — the skill to track down, come up with and capture or kill the wild beasts, fish, or birds on which life depended. Energy, courage, and endurance were essential, too, for success in the hunt. The bounty of nature could not be purchased. It could only be won by those with high human qualities and by concentrated human efforts. Outsiders coming into the country were soon aware of this. Even such "mighty hunters" as John Palliser and Lord Dunmore and other eager young sportsmen who travelled to the prairies in search of adventure and heavy game, had need of native guides and hunters to provide their parties with the intimate local knowledge and skills that were essential to success in the hunt and without which it was impossible to survive for long out on the plains.[6]

The utmost knowledge, skill, and persistence did not always yield a good living. In some years, in some localities, and in certain seasons nature proved "niggardly." The movements of the great buffalo herds were of an "utterly irregular character."[7] At times they did not appear in their accustomed range. At times other game or fish might fail. Then even the most cunning and untiring of hunters or fishermen might fail to make a catch. Seasonal shortages, moreover, especially in a severe winter, were a recurrent danger. Chief Dan Kennedy wrote: "Under ordinary circumstances the chase was sufficient to give the tribesmen [an] abundant living, but in winter the elements were unpredictable."[8]

In general, apart from such periods of spasmodic shortage, the buffalo Indians and the Indians and Métis of the parklands that fringed the open plains along the edge of the northern forests and western mountains, had at their disposal a range of nature-given produce that provided sufficient material means for a good life. Peter Erasmus, for example, commented in his reminiscences on the easy living of "the Prairie buffalo hunting days."[9] Alexander Sandison, in similar vein, remembered that people in the buffalo hunting days were "contented and happy; they had no licenses of any kind to pay either for hunting game or fishing or making beer. . . ."[10] Due allowance must be made for the nostalgia of old men looking back at the golden days of their youth, but the impression of abundance is confirmed by other men (John McDougall[11] and Sir Cecil Denny[12] for example),

whose lives spanned the transition from the buffalo hunting days of common property resources to the days of private property. On the other hand, the contrast between earlier plenty and a growing scarcity was noted by mid-nineteenth century visitors such as Milton and Cheadle, who wrote of the passing of "the days when it was possible to live in plenty by the gun and net alone,"[13] while David G. Mandelbaum's careful study of the Plains Cree indicates that the buffalo "was a reliable source of food and the Cree flourished. . . ."[14] The great herds provided food, shelter, clothing, coverings, containers, thread, rope, implements, toys — all that the Indians and Métis needed except lodge poles (which served also as travois poles) and materials for constructing carts and cabins; motive power, for which the people had to rely on their own muscles and those of their dogs and later horses, as well as tobacco and pipe stems, tea, and, of course, liquor. The herds even provided fuel in the form of "buffalo chips" that out on the plains supplemented the scarce supply of fire-wood, though it was not enough to meet the requirements of a northern winter when sheltered camping places accessible to stands of trees had to be found.

The buffalo herds and other natural produce of the plains and parklands provided the basis, if not for an easy life, at least for a good life, so long as the pressure of those products remained in balance with the supplies available. Professor J. G. Nelson's recent book, *The Last Refuge*, concludes: "No evidence has been found in this study which would indicate that the Indians were hunting any animal so heavily as to cause severe depletion and possible extinction prior to the arrival of the white man."[15] Whether any pressures of population did in fact develop, and, if not, how and why they were kept in check does not emerge with unquestionable clarity from such scattered and partial evidence as is available. Perhaps periodical seasons of scarcity corrected any incipient imbalance; perhaps the rigours of a roaming life were sufficient to curb any tendency to expansion of population beyond the limits of the available means of subsistence.

The wandering life led by the plains and woodland Indians certainly allowed little scope for the accumulation of material possessions, except such as were themselves mobile, notably horses and dogs. The constraints of a roving life, therefore, set a limit to any urge to an increasingly intensive exploitation of the natural products available to the wandering Indians.

Whether or not these constraints were reinforced by a conservationist attitude among those Indians is controversial question. We have no means of knowing clearly what was the practice of the native peoples before the coming of the white man. Such fragments of evidence as exist from Indian sources are largely in the form of reminiscences and material collected by anthropologists and historians from old people. Such memories may well be coloured by time and by revulsion against such evidently wanton exploitation by white men as the slaughter of the buffalo. They must be considered in relation to references in the records left by fur traders and other early travellers to heedless and improvident slaughter by Indians and

Métis, far in excess of any possible requirements for use. There are, however, as well, contrary comments such as those of Pierre Esprit Radisson that the "wild men kill not except for necessary use . . . ,"[16] and later statements such as that of R. B. Marcy that "the Indian, who supplied himself with food and clothing from the immense herds around his door would have looked on it as sacrilege to destroy more than barely sufficient to supply the wants of his family. . . ."[17] It is true that all the animals trapped in a buffalo pound were killed, but this was because the Indians believed that such as might escape would warn their fellows in future against getting caught in a similar trap.[18] The careful and systematic regulation of the buffalo hunt among plains Indians and, later, Métis was at least in part conservationist in effect and probably in intention, which is surprising when there in effect seemed as yet to be no danger of scarcity. There would seem to be small reason for conserving a resource that appears to be abundant beyond any conceivable need. "What level of killing is excessive if bison are incredibly numerous and believed to be supernatural in origin and inexhaustible?"[19]

F. G. Roe, in his great work entitled *The North American Buffalo*, after reviewing a wide range of assertion and counter-assertion, rejects the idea that Indians were "wasteful" in killing buffalo. Many of the observers whom he cites agree with Mandelbaum's statement about the Plains Cree that "they used every part" of their mainstay, the buffalo.[20]

The animals that were killed were killed for use so that the inroads made on the great herds by the Indians' hunt were limited by the peoples' needs. Even after the white man's arrival game was at first still killed only for use within the country. Fur-bearing animals, and especially beaver, were killed for the export trade. Buffalo and other game began also to be killed for exchange for the white man's goods at the fur trade posts, but this was basically to supply the needs of the post personnel and of the voyageurs who manned the brigades of canoes, York boats, and Red River carts that carried pelts out of the country and brought the trade goods into it.

Even so, as population increased, pressures on the natural produce of the country began to build up. The mixed blood offspring of Indian women and white fur traders and voyageurs were multiplying, and outsiders began to filter into the Western Plains. The population of Red River Settlement was rising according to the Red River Census from a total of 2,427 in 1831 to 4,459 in 1846,[21] and, according to the "Statistical Account of the Red River Colony" contained in one of the papers delivered by Sir George Simpson to the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Hudson's Bay Company in 1857, from 5,291 in 1849 to 6,623 in 1856.[22] By 1870 the Census of Manitoba (which, of course, included other settlements that were spreading westward up the Assiniboine, and to the north and east from those in the Red River valley) gave a total population of 12,228 and an estimated aboriginal population of 500.[23] Besides the natural increase in population, there had been since 1841 an inflow of

outsiders — missionaries, big-game hunters, gold-seekers, explorers, surveyors, traders, and settlers.[24] From 1870 onward this inflow was reinforced by the coming of the North West Mounted Police, by increasing numbers of public servants, and by a swelling tide of settlers and enterprising men intent on seizing business opportunities and the opportunities for making money offered by the wide plains and parklands of this new land rich with as yet unappropriated resources. As the population increased so did the drain on the natural products of the country. More food—and so more game and fish; more wood—for fuel and for increased construction; more hay; more water; and more space was needed.

By degrees, too, buffalo robes and buffalo tongues were beginning to acquire value in export markets. Chief Factor Robert Campbell, for example, reported that the Fort Pelly returns for 1864 included over 4,000 robes,[25] as well as the pemmican required for local use. The number of carts going out from Red River for the buffalo hunt, according to Alexander Ross, had increased from 540 in 1820 to 1,210 in 1840,[26] and perhaps these numbers may have increased further in later years.[27] This increased pressure of the biennial Red River hunt was intensified by parallel hunts made out on the plains not only from Hudson's Bay Company posts inland, but also from the new settlements that were springing up at Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert (Big Lake), Victoria, Whitefish Lake, and elsewhere.[28] Further in the late 1860's and early 1870's whiskey traders from Fort Benton and elsewhere in U.S. territory traded buffalo robes and hides in increasing quantities for shipment down the Missouri River.[29] All this meant a higher rate of depletion of the buffalo herds.

Despite their extraordinary numbers their powers of regeneration could not keep pace with the increased intensity of hunting that came about as a result of a final fatal combination of a new demand for buffalo hides, an increasingly efficient means of slaughter, and easier access to the plains. The new demand arose from the discovery in 1871 of a method of tanning buffalo hides that would make them strong enough for use as belting for power transmission in the new factories that were multiplying in the eastern United States.[30] This innovation coincided with improvements in the technique of shooting buffalo when long range, breach-loading, repeater rifles were introduced into the West.[31] A new means of transporting the hide hunters to the buffalo range and of carrying out thousands upon thousands of hides to markets in the East was provided with the construction of transcontinental railroads across the plains, starting with the Union Pacific in 1867 and culminating with the Northern Pacific between 1870 and 1873.[32] The massive destruction in American territory of the buffalo in which these three innovations played a part, swept away the great southern herd by 1875; by 1883 the northern herd had gone as a means of subsistence for the Indians and as a commercial resource.[33] In Canada the herds had disappeared by 1879, though a few stragglers were recorded from time to time during the next decade[34] and a handful of the wild cattle had been

tamed and preserved by private owners such as the Honourable James McKay of Deer Lodge, who built up a herd that on his death in 1879 was acquired by Colonel Samuel Bedson of the Stony Mountain Penitentiary.[35]

The destruction of the buffalo appears to have been an object of deliberate policy in the United States. Depite a series of attempts at conservation[36] nothing effective was done, and when, for instance, the Texas Legislature was considering a bill for the preservation of the buffalo, General Phil Sheriden dissuaded them from accepting the measure on the grounds that the hide hunters were doing more to settle the Indian question than the entire army had done in thirty years by destroying the Indian's commissary. He urged the legislators to let them kill, skin and sell until the buffalo was exterminated, as this was, he maintained, the only way to bring about a lasting peace.[37] Charles MacInnes asserted that in 1878 "the United States Government decided to starve Sitting Bull and his followers into surrender. A cordon of half-breeds, Indians, and American soldiers was therefore formed, and ordered to drive the buffalo back whenever the herds started to come north. . . ."[38] Certainly a line of prairie fires flared along the Border, heading the buffalo southward, while the despairing efforts of the Canadian Indians and of Sitting Bull's refugee Sioux to find the remnants of the great herds played a part in turning the buffalo away from their old range north of the forty-ninth parallel.[39]

Long before the great herds had finally vanished some, at least, of the Indians had made resolute efforts to prevent over-hunting by strangers on their lands and increasing over-use of other natural riches. Such efforts took the form both of attempts to keep out intruders and of imposing limits on their hunting. In American territory resistance to white intrusion led to long and bloody Indian warfare. Further north the Cree with whom Henday travelled to the Blackfoot country in 1754 had refused to take more than a limited number of beaver and game on the ground the Archithinues (Blackfoot) "would kill them if they trapped in their country."[40] The Rainy Lake Indians expected to be paid for right of way if S. J. Dawson built roads through their country.[41] The Métis buffalo hunt won access to the buffalo plains only by developing sufficient military strength to face down the hostility of the Sioux. Hind reported in 1858 "that the Plain Crees, in council assembled, had last year 'determined that in consequence of promises often made and broken by the white men and half-breeds, and the rapid destruction by them of the buffalo they fed on, they would not permit either white men or half-breeds to hunt in their country or travel through it, except for the purpose of trading for their dried meat, pemican [*sic*], skins and robes.' " "They wished to establish a sort of toll of tobacco and tea for permission to pass through their country, threatening that if it were not given they would . . . stop us by force."[42] Travellers in general were well aware of the need to carry presents for the Indians through whose country they passed, but Hind's experience is one of only a few known instances of attempts to levy specific payments for the use of right of way and other natural resources. Dr. John Rae, for example, recorded in 1861 that the

"Young Dogs" (Piapot's part-Cree, part-Assiniboine band) "act in a very oppressive manner towards the few half-breeds who have made a home for themselves in this part of the prairies [south of the Qu'Appelle Lakes]. They do not allow them to kill the buffalo for food, without levying a heavy fine for every buffalo they kill. . . ."[43] The following year Lord Dunmore's party of big game hunters encountered between the Qu'Appelle Lakes and the Coteau some Assiniboines whose Chief complained bitterly of white men who came from a rich country "to rob my meat stores." He allowed the half-breeds to take half of the game that lived in the country, but wanted more than the very small presents offered by the rich young pleasure-seekers for the privilege of hunting his people's game.[44] Such shrewd initiatives, which foreshadow the ideas of such modern economists as R. H. Coase and John Dales that the cure for over-rapid depletion of open access resources is to charge a price for their use that will induce the users to economise them,[45] did not find favour with the authorities once government had been established after 1870. In 1877, in the course of negotiations for the Blackfoot Treaty, one of the Blood Chiefs (Button Chief) said that the Mounted Police "had been destroying a quantity of wood. For this wood he asked that the Commissioners should make the Indians a present payment of fifty dollars a head to each chief, and thirty dollars a head to all others." Lt.-Governor Laird replied to a request that seemed to him "so unreasonable" that, if there was to be any payment, it ought not to be for the little wood that the Indians' benefactors had used, but "from the Indians to the Queen for sending them the police."[46] The laughter with which the other Chiefs received this sally obscured the essential problem: the drain imposed on its natural products by outsiders moving into the country was upsetting the traditional balance between what was available and its use. As Chief Sweet Grass of the Plains Cree had said the year before, "our country is no longer able to support us."[47]

In the years before the negotiations for the Treaties of 1871 to 1877 the Indians from Rainy Lake westward had been becoming increasingly uneasy and anxious about strangers coming into their country.[48] Parties of surveyors and telegraph men were turned back;[49] settlers were prevented from cutting wood and, if given permission to occupy land, were in some cases given only temporary permission for a defined period of time.[50] As the 1870's wore on, Indian bands that had not yet made a treaty made representations to the Lt.-Governor about their concern that strangers were coming into their country without leave and without payment. The principal Indians of Portage la Prairie, for example, protested in 1871 that they had never received anything for the land that belonged to them and "that settlers use to enrich themselves."[51]

The emphasis was on the use of the lands — indeed, it seems probable that the Indians thought of the problem as that of the right to *use* their lands when they entered into negotiations for a treaty. The outright *sale* of those lands was a concept entirely unfamiliar to them. How could interpreters find words for the Indians' meaning when they discussed white men's ideas

of "property" and "sale" and those terms had to be translated? Poundmaker's protest at the Carlton Treaty negotiations in 1876 sums up the difference between their point of view and that of the white man: "This is our land. It isn't a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given in little pieces back to us. It is ours and we will take what we want."[52] Before the negotiations began Chief Sweet Grass had sent a message to Lt.-Governor Archibald welcoming him but stating: "We heard our lands were sold and we did not like it; we don't want to sell our lands; it is our property, and no one has a right to sell them."[53]

In the course of the treaty negotiations the Commissioners were at pains to give the Indians assurances that certainly strengthened the expectation that they would continue to be able to use the resources of their lands. Morris records that he said in 1876: "Understand me, I do not want to interfere with your hunting and fishing. I want you to pursue it through the country, as you have heretofore done. . . ." "What I have offered does not take away your living, you will have it then as you have now." The Commissioners would not interfere with the Indians' daily lives, except to assist them in farming. As for the reserve land, this was to be marked off "so you will know it is your own, and no one will interfere with you." The Commissioners had not come "to barter or trade with you for the land," nor, they said, had they come "to take away anything that belongs to you. . . ."[54] A clause in the Blackfoot Treaty specifically stated that "Her Majesty the Queen hereby agrees with her said Indians that they shall have the right to pursue their vocations of hunting throughout the tract surrendered, subject to such regulations as may, from time to time, be made by the Government of the country" except for such tracts as might be required and taken up from time to time "for settlement, mining, trading, or other purposes by her Government of Canada, or by any of Her Majesty's subjects duly authorized therefor. . . ."[55] It is not surprising that the Indians did not foresee the significance of those exceptions. At Fort Pitt they made it clear that they wanted to be at liberty to hunt on any place as usual. They wished to be free to take wood as well as game: "When timber becomes scarcer on the reserves we select for ourselves, we want to be free to take it anywhere on the common. . . ."[56]

One chief still thought in 1876 that "the land is wide, there is plenty of room,"[57] but increasing pressures on space and resources were being felt. The arrival of the NWMP to enforce law and maintain order had one effect that is seldom recognized: the Indians were no longer to be permitted to keep intruders out of their country by force.[58] It is true that the lure of "fire-water" had induced the Blackfoot to allow into the country whiskey traders from Fort Benton to set up trading posts at Fort Whoop-Up and elswhere, to their ruin. The police suppressed this whiskey trade, but now other strangers might come freely into the tribal hunting grounds. The perspicacious Blood Chief who had raised the question of wood in the treaty negotiations of 1877 also asked that the Crees and half breeds should be sent back to their own country. Lt.-Governor Laird replied that "the

Commissioners could not agree to exclude the Crees and Half-breeds from the Blackfoot country; that they were the Great Mother's children as much as the Blackfeet and the Bloods, and she did not wish to see any of them starve."[59] Their competition for the few remaining buffalo increased the rate of depletion. Hunting by Sitting Bull's Sioux refugees added to the drain. The Blackfoot and other Indians ranged further and further afield in their search for the dwindling herds but by 1879 the buffalo had gone from the Canadian prairies and all the plains tribes faced starvation. The old balance between a limited human use of the gifts of nature held as common property by each tribe and the natural regeneration of those gifts was finally destroyed when they were thrown open to all comers, including those intent on commercial exploitation. The disappearance of the buffalo was a classic instance of the "tragedy of the commons."[60]

Not only the buffalo, but other game and other natural products were threatened too. Game in general was becoming scarce. Edgar Dewdney, then Indian Commissioner, reported in 1880 that "the country [to the] south is entirely destitute of game (that is, of small game). . . ."[61] Other observers predicted that game would disappear just as the buffalo had disappeared. In 1889, Superintendent Griesbach of the NWMP, for example, stated: "If something is not done and done quickly to prevent the wholesale destruction of game, a few years must see the end, and the halfbreeds and Indians of the north must lose a source of income and food which has hitherto been their greatest standby."[62]

A similar disaster threatened the Woods Indians, for whom fish was a very important staple food that had been a self-renewing resource provided by nature, on which they could depend so long as the lakes and rivers were not fished beyond the limits of the regenerative capacity of the fish population. The influx of strangers meant an increasing drain on fish stocks, especially of sturgeon and whitefish. Fishing in the spawning season was blamed for the depletion of the fisheries, but it seems to have been the pressures of new population and the emergence of an export fishery, carried on, for example, by a Detroit firm using seven miles of seine in Lake Winnipeg, that caused specially acute alarm.[63] Because it was difficult to establish rights of private property in the fisheries, an attempt was made to meet the problem by instituting a system of licences, mesh regulations, and a closed season while the fish were spawning. Since many Indians and half breeds depended for winter food on the fishery, strict enforcement of the regulations caused hardship to the local people. Dewdney petitioned for a relaxation of the new Fisheries Act in 1884 to allow limited fishing by half breeds in the Qu'Appelle Lakes during the closed season as the harvest had failed. Permission was given to each family to use one gill net each. The diary of F. C. Gilchrist, Fisheries Overseer for the Qu'Appelle River and the adjoining lakes from 1884 to 1891 and Fisheries Inspector for the Northwest Territories from 1891 to 1895, records a number of cases of exceptions being made to allow individuals to fish when they were in extreme want.[64]

It was not so much local individuals fishing for their own use that was the cause of the trouble, but fishing for sale to make a profit, especially when more efficient—and so more destructive—gear was used.

New uses for the waters of the country also played a part in the process of exhaustion. It was reported that steamboats on rivers were destroying the sturgeon fishery.[65] There is also a case reported of a water mill being set up at a traditional Indian fishing place on Red River, by leave of an Indian who had no real authority to grant such a right to the miller. This mill, like the steamboats, posed a threat to the sturgeon fishery.[66]

Besides game and fish, the wood supply was endangered. Settlers moving into the country required wood for fuel, for building, and for fencing.[67] More and more travellers used firewood, as did the police. Broad-axes were introduced by groups of 1859 and 1862 "Overlanders" from New Brunswick.[68] Saw mills followed in due course[69] and commercial logging operations began to carry off timber which had been an essential and customary source of supply on which Indians and mixed bloods alike depended. Protests began to pour in to the Lt.-Governor. Joseph Royal, for example, wrote in great concern begging Lt.-Governor Archibald to stop the "pillage" of timber on Crown Lands on the upper Assiniboine and Sale Rivers. These were almost the only places where the (local) population could get wood for fuel and construction for the next few years. "Jusqu'ici, ces bois étaient une *commune* où chacun allait se couper ce qu'il lui fallait pour son propre usage." The "exaggerated cuts by speculators" had upset the Métis whose lands would be of little use if all the wood had gone.[70]

Commercial logging operations elsewhere threatened Indian wood supplies. The Roseau River Reserve, south of Winnipeg, had not been surveyed when in March 1872 lumber men started wood-cutting operations. The customs officer at Pembina — the only government official within reach — intervened and, on the Lt.-Governor's authority, posted notices forbidding the felling of trees, but as soon as he had gone the lumberers set to work again, laughing at the Indians' protests. The Indians themselves were not allowed to sell their wood, which they had started to do to supplement their diminishing means of livelihood. This prohibition was intended to conserve supplies of firewood and wood for essential construction for the Indians of the Reserve. Yet although cutting and sale of wood by the Indians was prohibited — and dealers like Andrew McDermott in Winnipeg were forbidden to buy wood from them — the Indians had no means of preventing outsiders from pirating their wood.[71]

The Hudson's Bay Company, too, had drawn on stands of timber, for fuel and building purposes, and also for the construction of the great York boats for the annual transport brigade; now they introduced steamboats on the lakes and rivers of the West and for these a great deal of wood was needed as fuel. The Indians were alarmed at this new drain on their wood supply. One recorded clash over the issue occurred when Broken Finger's band in 1872 refused to allow the Company to cut wood at Big Sandy Point near Manitoba House for the steamers. He was sure that the point had been

promised as part of the Reserve, but this had not yet been surveyed. In this case the Company won out; the Reserve was held not to include the Point with its good harbour — a "most excellent wooding station."[72]

There were other protests over wood. Half breeds claimed that Canadian settlers were knocking down fences they had built, and carrying off logs they had cut and piled ready to build cabins.[73]

There were similar problems about the waters of the country. Some concerned conflicting uses of those waters — such as the cases mentioned earlier of navigation harming the fishery, and the construction of a mill taking over a traditional Indian fishing site. A more general problem was that of drinking places in a thirsty land. Under common law, water could not itself be claimed as anyone's property. Before the needs of mining and irrigation compelled the creation of special property rights in water, the only way to secure control of a water source was to acquire the land around it and to prevent any approach to it by other would-be users. The problem became acute in ranching country where hundreds of square miles of good grazing were useful only if there was a sufficient opportunity for watering stock. Attempts to gain control of watering places were frowned on by those who were concerned with the needs of a wider range of users. John R. Craig in *Ranching With Lords and Commons* wrote, "Neither settlers nor cattle companies should be permitted to monopolize the water front of the grazing country."[74] The land itself was useless without access to a supply of water, and, as Craig maintained, "a statute prohibiting them [settlers] from taking up land along the stream or enclosing springs . . . practically excluded settlement."[75] There was thus a conflict between the need to preserve a common right to water sources for all using the open range and the requirement for settlement of identifiable, exclusive rights to an essential supply of water.

The wide grass lands themselves, on which for so long buffalo and other game had thrived in untold millions, were open to use, once Indian claims had been extinguished, by anyone who wished to pasture cattle.

For a couple of decades after 1874 beyond the limits of occupied land, and surveyed land, any passer-by could still use grass and hay as he pleased — or at least what had been left by close-grazing herds of buffalo or predatory swarms of grasshoppers. Wandering bands of Indians and of mixed bloods, and casual travellers pastured their horses and cattle freely as they moved across the country. The herds of the Hudson's Bay Company grazed under the watchful eye of the "Horse Guard" in the vicinity of each post. The few scattered mission and mixed blood settlements drew on surrounding grasslands for forage and hay as they had need. Even in "the early days of the [ranching] industry the number of operators was so small, compared to the grazing area available, that a man could homestead a quarter section and turn his cattle loose in hundreds without having any shade of title to any of the land on which his cattle grazed." But later, "owing to the rapid multiplication of ranching enterprises, large and small, it [became] necessary for the rancher to protect himself from encroach-

ment of neighboring ranchers by leasing large areas adjoining his homestead. . . . The anxiety to control grazing areas has resulted among large ranchers in the straight purchase of lands.''[76]

Besides pasture freely open to access by the still limited number of users, the right to make hay on unclaimed land within reach of transient and permanent settlements was of great importance wherever, from the Red River Settlement westward, multiplying horses and cattle required winter feed. Mrs. John Norquay described a characteristic hay-cutting situation in Red River in the days before the West became a part of Canada. Up to a day fixed by proclamation towards the end of July, two miles of hinterland behind each river lot was known as "the hay privilege" of the owner of the lot, "but in actual practice the whole prairie back of the Selkirk settlers' lots was common ground for hay-cutting. Before the day fixed for the beginning of hay-cutting each year, the best hay meadows were spied out and each man had planned where he was to cut hay. In dry years when there was a scarcity of hay it was usual for the men to go out and be in readiness to start hay-cutting on the stroke of midnight." A man "pre-empted his hay area by making a circle around it with a scythe." Each man's ownership of his hay circle was always respected, but "if a prairie fire destroyed the hay-stacks of a family the neighbours always supplied the deficiency.''[77]

When the new "postage stamp" province of Manitoba was created in 1870 there were problems of assimilating such rights of common into the new system of property rights in land that were systematized as the formal land survey expanded. Commissioners were appointed in Manitoba in 1873 to work out a means whereby the old hay privilege and rights of common might be transformed into some equivalent that could be fitted into the new framework of property rights based on the comprehensive land survey and land ownership founded on it.[78] Traditional hay commons were to be a recurring problem as the frontier of private property moved westward, transforming the untamed wilderness into identifiable land lots held as exclusive private property, not only on Red River but gradually right across the prairies and parklands into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

As private ownership of specific parcels of land extended, customary common rights to hay and wood and other resources were squeezed out. Unclaimed open access wood, water, grass, and land dwindled. Space itself began to be a problem. The Indians had been accustomed to camping wherever they saw fit within the untamed wilderness that was their home, while Métis and other travellers had done the same. As the land began to be progressively occupied, old camping grounds were threatened. The Hudson's Bay Company had early found it necessary to reserve a camping ground of 500 acres about Fort Garry for plains traders when they came in from the West to trade.[79]

A life based on free access to a variety of common resources scattered over a wide territory had involved continual movement from one base of operations to another according to the season, the migration of game, and

traditional ceremonial meeting places. Such a life was highly space-intensive and required free access to wide areas and use of the resources on them.

It became evident, as private property rights expanded, that the only hope of Indians or Métis to retain some of the space to which they were accustomed would be by securing from the Government recognition of their claim to the extensive areas over which they wished to be free to roam as they had always done.

The Indians and Métis were still thinking in terms of the space that was needed for their accustomed way of living, of hunting and trapping. They were ignorant of agricultural criteria and failed to envisage the limited amount of land thought to be necessary for a sedentary life. The extent of the reserves for which they asked seemed unreasonable and was unacceptable to white men thinking of agriculture. For example, Yellow Quill (Oo-za-we-kwun) in 1874 "asserted very large pretensions as to the extent of his Reserve" but was finally persuaded to accept the area agreed under the terms of the Treaty of 1871 to so much land on the south and east side of the Assiniboine River above the Portage as would furnish 160 acres for each family of five and "a further tract enclosing said reserve to comprise an equivalent to twenty-five square miles of equal breadth, to be laid out round the reserve" though with due regard to the claims of any settlers already established at the date of the Treaty within these bounds.[80]

Bishop Grandin submitted a request on behalf of his Métis flock at St. Albert for a land reserve that seemed to Lt.-Governor Archibald entirely unrealistic in its amplitude.[81]

A conflict of ideas developed and a failure of understanding on both sides when the requirements of a wandering life impinged on the claims of new settlers, whether Métis or white, farmers or traders. The case of the Treaty Ground at Fort Qu'Appelle was a classic instance of the clash of ideas and interests — and of the confusion that arose from imperfect identification of land boundaries and administrative uncertainties. Here Treaty Number Four had been negotiated in 1874, and here the Cree and Saulteaux Treaty Indians expected to camp each year when they received their treaty payments. They had a "great regard" for the site and were likely to assemble there for many years to come. Meanwhile, however, the buffalo were becoming very scarce and a number of half breed hunters began to look for land to settle on. They came to the Qu'Appelle Valley and the Indians, finding that the Treaty Ground was likely to be occupied, applied to the Indian Agent for an assurance that they would always have their treaty money paid at this point. Accordingly, the Indian Agent asked that the land might be reserved, and the Department of the Interior approved the application, subject to a stipulation that the land might be resumed by the Minister if this was required in the public interest, and provided that care was taken to exempt any land to which a prior claim might have been established by settlement or cultivation.

The half breeds were headed off, but a small portion of the 1000 acres at issue, stretching from the eastern boundary of the Hudson's Bay Company reserve to the lake, had already been applied for by a Mr. Smith representing "the Honourable Mr. Bowen of Winnipeg" (probably Walter Bown, John Christian Schultz's partner). The Indian agent had asked that some other arrangement be made with him. The following spring the North West Trading Company, a Schultz-Bown enterprise, asked that information should be forwarded to the Surveyor General, so that land claimed by the Company at Qu'Appelle Lakes might be located on the map. Schultz, as President, had applied to the Surveyor General for a patent covering almost the same ground as that reserved by the Indian Agent. Schultz had heard of this application and represented to the Surveyor General the difficulties that it might cause the Company. The Indian Agent explained that he had no wish to interfere with the Company's claim and would be satisfied if the Company would give permission for the Treaty Ground to be used for the annual ceremonies of annuity payment until these could be transferred to the Indian reserves in accordance with the policy that the Indian Department had been attempting to persuade the Indians to accept.

Schultz, no doubt happy that such a promising occasion for trade with the Indians should be brought to the Company's doorstep, gave permission for the Indians to use any unimproved land — land of which Dewdney had written that what the Indians had been promised should be kept for them, a promise that ought to be regarded as sacred, just as much as if the land was a reserve. Earlier, in 1879, one William Daniels had squatted on Section 5, Township 21, Range 13, west of the Second Meridian. On his death this plot was claimed on the basis of a quit claim deed by a certain Cameron. Further to confound confusion, Cameron's lawyer had a letter from the Department of the Interior asserting that the land belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company with which terms must be negotiated. Cameron's claim was supported by Alex Petit Didier and pressed by Archibishop Taché. Yet another claimant, a man of action named Jackson, having purchased the north-west half of the disputed township, without more ado surveyed it into town lots which he sold in spite of an express warning from Dewdney both to Jackson and the Hudson's Bay Company and threatening posters displayed on the land to deter trespassers. Jackson had gone into the speculation, so Dewdney claimed, with his eye open, depending on political friends to pull him through. When the Indians arrived, Pie-Pot (Piapot) refused to stay on the high land above the Treaty Ground flat. He led the Indians down and planted his flag there, stating that this was where he would receive his treaty payment. The Agent, having summoned the NWMP to his support, persuaded him to adjourn to the office, and the affair bogged down in inter-departmental altercation.[82]

This was not the only case in which a spot held in veneration by Indians passed into white men's hands. Already in Red River the Kirk of Kildonan had been "erected on a piece of land long desecrated by the idolatrous revels of the Indians" according to the Rev. Dr. John Black's

account;[83] in other words, a site where they had encamped every year and held their annual Dog Feast before they separated for the winter.

The Indians' interest in other disputed land was of immediate practical significance. A controversy developed over the allocation to the Hudson's Bay Company of ten acres at each end of Portage la Loche (Methye Portage) and of fifty acres at each end of the Grand Portage on the Saskatchewan River — including the whole of the portage track. John Schultz drew the attention of the Secretary of State to the danger of allowing the Hudson's Bay Company to retain the exclusive use of landing places at these points, which would give the "infernal company" virtual control of the carrying trade of the Saskatchewan, Mackenzie, and Peace Rivers, to the disadvantage of "other mercantile interests."[84] He did not mention the possibility of even greater "disadvantage" to the Indians.

Such struggles for key property rights were symptomatic of the third cataclysmic change that was now taking place in the economy of the plains and parkland of the West: the establishment of exclusive private property instead of the traditional common property of the native peoples. Not only had the coming of the white man built up population and commercial pressures on the natural riches of the country; not only had the Indians' tribal territories been opened to use by newcomers — so that the buffalo had been destroyed, other game woefully depleted, once rich fisheries endangered, and wood lots ruthlessly cut out; but the native peoples found that they might no longer help themselves to what they needed in the country through which they had been accustomed to wander. Such dwindling riches as remained might not now be used except by the owner of a homestead, a railway right of way, a grazing lease, or a timber-cutting licence. As the wide plains were progressively surveyed and taken up by private owners, as homesteads were fenced in and grazing rights leased; as the right to cut wood was appropriated to lumbermen; as fences closed in hay meadows and drinking spots; as railroad rights of way cut across Indian trails and game trails, the age old rights of common gave way before the advance of exclusive salable property rights. Only the private owner, supported by the police, might now use the gifts of the Great Spirit.[85] Gradually the full implications of the Treaties became clear. Assurances as to continued freedom to hunt over tribal lands as usual until those lands were settled or appropriated for other uses faded into insignificance. It became clear that the true meaning of the Treaties lay in the clauses which provided (for example, in the words of Treaty Number Six) that the Indians had ceded, released, surrendered, and yielded up forever "all their rights, titles and privileges, whatsoever, to the lands" within the Treaty limits.[86] The country and the nature-given riches of that country that had been shared by the members of the tribe which ranged it and their cousins of mixed blood, its spaces, its grass, its waters, its woods, and its other natural products now belonged to private owners who were entitled to keep other people out of their property.

This final tragedy was a tragedy of the loss by the native peoples of

their customary "commons" to private owners of exclusive property rights, rights which only those who had money and understood the strange new laws could hope to make their own. The Indians had their reserves and the Métis were allocated — and quickly lost — half-breed land or scrip, but nothing in the experience, character, or point of view of either people made it possible for them to come to terms with the, to them, disastrous new institution of private property in land and its riches. They had been urged and cajoled to take up reserves. Once settled on them they found that the narrow boundaries of those reserves — small plots of land marked off from the wide wilderness that had once been free to them — had become the limits of the land whose natural produce they might count on using. The Indians who had in 1871 agreed at Lower Fort Garry and Lake Manitoba to Treaties Numbers One and Two,[87] for instance, were warned in a proclamation that from the dates of those Treaties they had "no right to cut any wood or timber on any land except within the Limits of the reserves allotted to them under the said Treaties. . . ."[88] No one, white or Indian, might cut wood outside a reserve unless he had a licence from the Crown to do so; a white man who had such a licence was entitled to cut wood and must not be molested by the Indians. The Indians negotiating Treaty Number 6 in 1876 asked specifically to be allowed to continue to cut timber on Crown Lands,[89] but do not appear to have had any answer.

When the buffalo had gone and ranchers complained that starving Indians were killing their cattle the Indians were kept more rigidly to their reserves.[90]

The question of what exactly the boundaries of those reserves included became increasingly important as the Indians found themselves more and more strictly limited to the use of the resources on them. In the early stages of land and resource appropriation a variety of clashes occurred over reserves that were not yet surveyed nor identified. In some cases the Indians believed that the reserve to which they had agreed included certain specific land features and resources which, upon the survey's being made, turned out not to be within its limits. Misunderstandings were very hard to avoid when the Treaty Commissioners did not know the local lie of the land, and the Indians had little conception of what survey measurements meant. Further, reserves were not always surveyed immediately after the Treaty had been signed, and until the survey had been completed no one knew just where the boundaries of the reserve might lie. Such uncertainty was an element in both the Sandy Point and Roseau River imbroglios described above.

Some constraint on the use of the natural riches of the country was certainly becoming essential with the increased pressure on its products that built up with the influx of strangers after 1870. Unaccustomed demands were creating unprecedented scarcities. The constraints of private property and a system of market prices was one way of rationing the use of the newly scarce resources and of safeguarding them against over-use to the point of exhaustion. The alternative was some sort of conservation leg-

islation. A belated and ineffective attempt had been made to save the buffalo by such means. A law passed by the North-West Council in 1877 proved impossible to enforce[91] and came to nothing, despite Morris's hope that the law made to protect them would "save the buffalo."[92] He was "satisfied that a few simple regulations would preserve the herds for many years,"[93] but within three years they were gone. Similar efforts were made to save the fisheries, especially the whitefish and sturgeon fisheries. Regulations made under the Fisheries Act of 1876 were enforced at least to some extent, as F. C. Gilchrist's diary shows. He seems to have thought that the measures taken had increased the catch of fish, but they were difficult to enforce as concession had to be made when those who broke the law, many of whom seem to have been mixed bloods, were apparently so dependent on the fishery that on occasion Gilchrist waived the fines and gave limited permission to fish during the close season.[94] To devise conservation measures that would be effective without penalizing the native peoples, who had always lived by the hunt and the fishery, was a puzzle.

The dramatic disappearance of the buffalo herds and other products of the land created such havoc in the subsistence of the native peoples that it overshadowed the more slowly acting but in the end still more disruptive impact on the native peoples of the new order based on private ownership of all natural resources outside the reserves.

Hugh Dempsey gives a vivid picture of the disastrous effect on the Blackfoot of the loss of the buffalo and of the new order:

> Nothing was the same in the old land. The formerly neat lodges of the Blackfeet were ragged and torn, the once-gallant warriors were subdued, and even the children had lost the spark of life. The buffalo were gone, the old life was gone. Scores of fresh graves dotted the countryside from the Oldman River to the Missouri. Warriors who had defeated every enemy in battle were reduced to bony derelicts before starvation and disease carried the life from their bodies. No one knows exactly how many people from the Blackfoot tribe died during those starvation years, but from 1879 to 1881 at least one thousand members [out of some 6,000] of the nation in Canada perished.
>
> . . . What remained? A small plot of land in the middle of their domain. Here they would camp in the river bottoms and receive the beef and flour of the white men. They would scratch the earth and grow turnips and other vegetables. . . .[95]

The *Edmonton Bulletin* carried the sad story on in its reports of misery on the reserves in 1881 and the years that followed. There was no food and few clothes: the lodges were wretched.[96]

The long-run effect was described twenty-five years later by the Reverend John McDougall, himself a great advocate of "civilization" and settlement, who had personally witnessed and taken part in the change from the old common-property economy of the Indians to the system of reserves in the midst of the private-property/market economy of the white man. In the old days, he wrote:

> Millions of cattle [buffalo], millions of deer, and countless millions of fowl; the trout in the streams and lakes, the whitefish and sturgeon filling great inland oceans, and myriad lakes and streams were his, all his. The bracing winters made him strong, and the warm fruitful summers made him glad. . . . He gratefully accepted things as they were and did not ask for more and better.
>
> . . . civilization with its permanent home life and dwelling in houses and fixed habitations and multiple insanitation, has been cruel and full of disease-breeding to the Indian peoples. While their former life gave them pure air and constant change of camp and scene, the steadily demanded need of a permanent residence on the reserve has thrust the Indians into crude cabins full of foul atmosphere and surcharged with germs of terrible disease. Then the change of diet from meat and fowl and fish to cereals and vegetables and salt and sugar and syrup, etc., has come so suddenly, especially with all our western Indians, that nature herself has been taken by surprise and is unable thus hurriedly to adapt herself to these sudden and radical changes.[97]

Part of the contrast was, of course, attributable to the transition from a nomadic economy to a settled economy, which, as Professor V. F. Fowke has noted,[98] cannot succeed on a subsistence basis in the geographical conditions of the Canadian prairies. A very large part, however, was due to the transition from the old common-property system — by way of a disastrous and destructive interlude of open access to natural riches — to an economy based on the purchase and sale of property rights, with the Indians remaining in an uneasy limbo on their reserves, part way between the old institutions of shared resources and the new institutions of private personal property. They had neither the experience, nor the acquisitive skills, nor the will to prosper under a system of private property, but, in any case, in a laudable attempt to prevent the dangers of an "unprotected encounter"[99] with newcomers engaged in buying and selling to make a profit — unfamiliar, as they were, with the idea of making money by shrewd speculation in land values — the Indians were made wards of the Crown, as represented by the Department of Indian Affairs, and a reserve system developed that was neither fully a matter of common property nor fully a matter of individual private property. The reserves and their resources were intended to provide for the members of the bands that held the reserves and their descendants. They were to use them in perpetuity, though where it was considered that the reserve that had been set aside was bigger than was needed, arrangements might be made for the sale of the excess land on agreement of the adult males of the band. The proceeds were paid into a trust fund and interest from this fund was to be used for the benefit of the band; in rare cases part of the capital sum might be applied to some specific purpose, such as the acquisition of agricultural machinery on the Blackfoot Reserve.[100] The results of probably well-intentioned controls may have added to the difficulties of the Indians in the new regime. To quote McDougall again:

> If he is a treaty Indian he cannot visit a friend on a neighbouring reserve without a permit. He cannot go to the nearest market town

> without a permit. In what was his own country, and on his own land to which he was born, out of the centuries, he cannot travel in peace without a permit. He cannot buy or sell without a permit. He can raise cattle, but he cannot sell them unless the Government official allows. He may cultivate the soil, but is not the owner of his own produce. He cannot sell firewood or hay from the land that is his by divine and citizen right, and thus reap the result of his own industry, unless subject to the caprice and whim of one who often becomes autocratic.[101]

The Indians' economic activities were, thus, subject to other constraints than those of the market, the constraints of administrative controls, often clumsy and ill-judged, imposed by the Indian Act under the vigilant surveillance of the Indian Agent and the Farm Instructor.

The process of readjustment to the new state of affairs was slow and painful and standards of living on the reserves remained at a low level. The abundance of the buffalo days had gone forever. In those days the Indians had been, in the words of the Commissioner of the NWMP, "self-supporting, almost rich, and certainly contented. . . ."[102] Now all they had was a share in the limited resources of the reserve, a few dollars each a year by way of treaty annuities, and any other treaty benefits that were due them, such as education and medical assistance under the controversial "medicine-chest" clause, and, as time went on, something from income that was earned as interest by trust funds accumulated through the surrender of supposedly surplus reserve land. As well, there were government rations — often grudgingly given — to stave off starvation. The Indians were now supposed to learn to support themselves by farming or cattle raising — both unfamiliar exercises. Some of them learnt very fast to farm efficiently, as witness evidence that was given in 1887 to the Senate Committee on Natural Food Products,[103] but returns to gardening and agriculture were uncertain[104] and the problem of securing housing and sanitation adequate for a sedentary life remained acute. Moreover, a people used to a meat diet and a wandering life in the open air and sunshine were desperately vulnerable to malnutrition and disease when their basic food changed over-night to salt pork and flour, and the children began to be cooped up in school rooms. Government rations by no means made up for the loss of real income from the lost commons, and the humdrum life of the sedentary agriculturalist was a poor substitute for the varied and exciting life of the wandering hunter and horse-raiding warrior.

The economic basis of the life of the Métis, too, had been the abundant common resources to which they had had access. Few of them understood the significance of property in land. Much of the half breed land reserve of 1,400,000 acres set aside in 1870 in Manitoba (or scrip that represented a claim to that land) slipped from the hands of its mixed blood recipients at prices far below its market value.[105] The mixed bloods, having disposed of their claims, moved further west into still unsettled lands, hoping to continue to live the wandering life they were used to and enjoyed. Civilization, settlement, and private property caught up with them.[106] The rising of 1885

was a last despairing attempt to protect the commons on which they depended for their way of life. With those commons gone they faced economic disaster, especially as supplementary opportunities for earning an income as tripmen were disappearing at the same time as the buffalo. Steamboats and then railways replaced the traditional "brigades" of York boats and Red River carts that had been manned by mixed blood voyageurs.

In the old life a good hunt, a good catch of fish, a plentiful wild rice or berry crop had meant for both Indians and Métis leisure for dancing, feasting, horse racing, gambling, visiting, and ceremonies. Alexander Sandison remembered with pleasure the dancing and week-long wedding feasts of old Red River.[107] The shared gifts of nature had provided the means, not for the accumulation of material wealth for its own sake, but for a good life as the Indians and Métis saw it. It was a happy life on the whole, albeit at times a precarious one, subject to periodic shortages if the game or the fisheries failed and one that was vulnerable to alcohol. Still, Captain (later Sir Cecil) Denny judged that "with plenty of meat in the lodges, no happier people might be found anywhere" than the people of the Blackfoot Confederacy in the old days.[108]

Now the abundance of those days had given place to a new kind of poverty from which there seemed to be no prospect of escape, as the pressures on the resources of the country, of new people, new demands, and new technology increased and the native peoples lost control of those resources to the newcomers.

A bitter turn of the screw was added to this new indigence by the enrichment of successful new white neighbours. At one end of the economic scale the strangers who now owned the gifts of the Great Spirit—if they were shrewd or lucky — became rich on the basis of the newly created property rights, while at the other end of the scale the native peoples found themselves sunken in abject and persistent poverty. Feverish land booms, speculation in half breed scrip, control of key points on transport routes or the sites of burgeoning towns all gave rise to new wealth based, not on a steady use of the productivity of the Indians' ancestral lands, but on the rising value of those lands themselves, as well as on using up stocks of such natural riches as timber.

The Indians and Métis had been used to a notably egalitarian society in which all had access to the common riches provided by nature, and in which, if disparities in skill, strength, and luck gave some more wealth than others, the difference had been to a considerable extent offset by sharing by the more fortunate of their material means with those in need, in accordance with the strong native tradition. Now they were shouldered aside by wealth-accumulating newcomers, sinking to the lowest position in an unfamiliar order characterised by wide disparities in economic and social status.

The abundance of natural riches in the days before 1870 had given way to a new and increasing scarcity. Some mechanism had become essential to

secure the rationing of the newly scarce nature-given resources. So long as these were open-access resources, free to all comers, they were used without stint and beyond their natural power of renewal. Once they became private property, with the price rising as scarcity increased, that rising price compelled some limitation of their use. Farming and cattle raising, more labour and capital intensive than hunting and fishing, replaced those older ways of getting a living, with their spacious requirements of territory. Even so, private property in land did not prevent the "soil mining" that nearly turned the prairies into a dust bowl by the 1930's. Whatever the effectiveness of private property as a means of securing the rationing and husbanding of scarce natural resources, its effect in terms of the redistribution of wealth played a part in creating an extreme of deprivation among a people unused to its constraints alongside of new wealth among the new property owners. It provided a means whereby the resources of the West were mobilized for the peopling of the plains, but in so doing it contributed to the economic degradation of the original people of the plains and to a new inequality in the economic and social system.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West, 1870-71* (Toronto, 1935), pp. 5-21; F. G. Roe, *The North American Buffalo*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1970), pp. 650-51.

[2]Irene M. Spry, *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition* (Toronto, 1968), pp. 143, 145-46; J. G. Nelson, *The Last Refuge* (Montreal, 1973), pp. 110-11; Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers* (Toronto, 1913), pp. 303-304; F. G. Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 650.

[3]E. Walker, "The seasonal nature of post-altithermal communal bison procurement on the Northwestern plains," *NAPA'O: Saskatchewan Anthropological Journal*, IV, 2 (April 1974), 1-6; Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 630-49.

[4]Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-18, 374-75, 658; Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[5]Alexander Henry the Elder, for example, commented that the cause of the perpetual war between the "Chipeways" (Ojibwa) and Sioux was "that both claim, as their exclusive hunting ground, the tract of country which lies between them." [See Alexander Henry (the Elder), *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776* (New York, 1809; repr. Edmonton, 1969), p. 189.]

[6]There are, for example, many references to guides and hunters in the Palliser reports. Though some proved "expensive and useless," the skill of others was most impressive, notably that of the Stoney hunter Nimrod. See also John Rae, "A visit to the Red River and the Saskatchewan, 1861," ed. Irene M. Spry, in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. CXL, Part I (February 1974); and "Log of the Wanderers on the Prairies in search of Buffalo, Bear, Deer, etc.," 1862, Dunmore Papers, for comments on the skill of the great plainsman and guide, James (later the Honourable James) McKay.

[7]Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 654.

[8]Saskatchewan Archives, Regina.

[9]Peter Erasmus, "Buffalo Days and Nights," 1928, MS Glenbow-Alberta Institute, p. 65 (shortly to be published).

[10]Alexander Sandison, Reminiscenses, 1914, Schultz Collection, Box Ia, Misc. MSS, Public Archives of Manitoba.

[11]For the long list of his books, see Spry, "Early Visitors to the Canadian Prairies," in Brian W. Blouet and Merlin P. Lawson, eds., *Images of the Plains*, shortly to be published by the University of Nebraska Press.

[12]Sir Cecil E. Denny, *The Law Marches West* (Toronto, 1939; repr. 1972) has many references to the days of plenty in the 1870's in what is now Alberta.

[13]Viscount Milton and W. B. Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land* (London, 1865), p. 160.

[14]David G. Mandelbaum, *Anthropology and People: "The World of the Plains Cree"* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, University Lectures, No. 12, 1967), p. 7.

[15]Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 189. However, he adds that it has been claimed by some archaeologists and other scientists that man contributed to the extinction of the mammoth and other giant fauna of the plains some 11,000 years ago.

[16]Cited in Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 292, 655.
[17]R. B. Marcy, *Exploration of the Red River of Louisiana, in the Year 1854* (Washington, 1854), p. 104.
[18]John McDougall, *Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe* (Toronto, 1896; repr. Ryerson), p. 282.
[19]Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 152. See also Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 654-59.
[20]Mandelbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[21]Red River Census, Public Archives of Manitoba.
[22]*Report* of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 1857, Appendix B, 363. There were also settlements of Métis south of the American Border at Pembina on the Red River, at St. Joseph (now Walhalla, North Dakota) on the Pembina River, and later, further west in Montana.
[23]*Census of Canada, 1870-71*, Vol. IV, 380, lxxii and lxxxiv. The first official Map of Manitoba gives the population in 1871 as 5,707 French halfbreeds, 4,083 English halfbreeds, 1,565 Whites, and 533 Indians [A. L. Russell, Map of the Province of Manitoba, 1871; original in Public Archives of Canada, reproduced in J. Warkentin and R. I. Ruggles, *Historical Atlas of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society, 1970), p. 249].
[24]Spry, "Early Visitors . . ." (see footnote 11 above).
[25]Robert Campbell (Chief Factor), Memoirs (typescript kindly loaned to me by Professor Donald MacGregor), p. 182.
[26]Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State* (London, 1856; repr. Edmonton, 1972), p. 246; Roe, *op. cit.*, Ch. XIV.
[27]But see Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-13, for a critique of some estimates of the number of carts.
[28]See Spry, *Palliser Expedition;* Erasmus MS (see footnote 9 above); and Rae, *op. cit.*, for references to these hunts. See also Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-75.
[29]For this see Paul F. Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West 1865-1885* (Minneapolis, 1955); and Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-75. Roe has also a detailed discussion of estimates of the whole process of depletion of the southern and northern herds in the American West and in Canada in Chapters XV, XVI, and XVII.
[30]R. A. Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (New York, 1949; 3rd ed., 1967), p. 670; Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 166; Ralph K. Andrist, *The Long Death, The Last Days of the Plains Indian* (London, 1964), p. 179.
[31]Billington, *op. cit.*, p. 670; Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 432, 449-50.
[32]Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-31, 449; Billington, *op. cit.*, pp. 645-52, 670.
[33]Roe, *op. cit.*, Ch. XV and XVI.
[34]*Ibid.*, Ch. XVII; Erasmus MS.
[35]"The Honourable James McKay," Inkster Papers, 4, Public Archives of Manitoba. The wood buffalo of the forested northern plains still survived, as they do to this day by dint of careful management and protection in Wood Buffalo Park.
[36]Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 870 and Appendix H; Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto, 1880), pp. 188, 193, 195, 227, 228, 237, 241, 259, 267-68, 271; Denny *(op. cit.)* records that the North-West Territories law was a dead letter, being impossible to enforce.
[37]Martin S. Garretson, *The American Bison* (New York, 1938), p. 128.
[38]MacInnes, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
[39]The Hon. Edgar Dewdney reported that "prairie fires, however, were started at different points almost simultaneously, as if by some preconstructed arrangement, and the country north of the boundary line was burnt from Wood Mountain on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the west, and nearly as far north as the latitude of the Qu'Appelle" (*Annual Report* of the Department of Indian Affairs for 1880). See also Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 477. Dempsey *(op. cit.*, p. 114) says that "the Indians had no doubt that the American hide hunters had started the fires to prevent the main herds from returning to Canada" in 1879.
[40]See Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., "York Factory to the Blackfoot Country: the Journal of Anthony Hendry, 1754-55," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd Series, I, 1907, Sec. II, pp. 307-360. The passage quoted is on p. 344.
[41]Archibald Papers, 25, Public Archives of Manitoba.
[42]Henry Youle Hind, *North-West Territory. Report of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition* (Toronto, 1859), p. 52.
[43]Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
[44]"Log of the Wanderers . . . ," p. 14, Dunmore Papers.
[45]John H. Dales, *Pollution, Property and Prices* (Toronto, 1968); Ronald Coase, "The Problem of Social Costs," *Journal of Law and Economics* (October 1960); P. Crabbé and Irene M. Spry, *Natural Resource Development in Canada* (Ottawa, 1973), Session IV.
[46]Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-58.
[47]*Ibid.*, p. 171.
[48]Palliser reported on the disquietude in 1857 of the Rainy Lake Ojibwa (see Spry, *Palliser Expedition*, pp. 76-79). S. J. Dawson had submitted a memorandum dated December 17, 1869, about the Indians on the Red River (Dawson) Route and in subsequent correspon-

dence stressed the importance of securing the right of way from the Indians (Archibald Papers, 1-3). The following, among others, reported on the growing anxiety of the Western Plains Indians: the Rev. George McDougall (1875), C. F. Wm. J. Christie, from Edmonton (1871), and the Rev. Father Constantine Scollen (1876). See Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-70, 173-75, 247-49.

[49]Morris Papers, Ketcheson Collection, 69, Public Archives of Manitoba; Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-75.

[50]Wm. Fletcher reported from Portage la Prairie, October 25, 1870, that for about eight miles, from the Portage to Rat Creek, land might be occupied only for three years by permission of the Indians, granted only by the intervention of the "Late Governor," James McKay (Archibald Papers, 58).

[51]Archibald Papers, 332.

[52]Erasmus MS, pp. 280-89.

[53]Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

[54]*Ibid.*, pp. 186, 204, 205, 211, 212. In Manitoba, Indians still have the right to hunt on private land.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 369.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 215.

[57]*Ibid.*

[58]As Turner puts it, "the road to an enormous territorial promise had been opened" [John Peter Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police, 1873-1893* (Ottawa, 1950), Vol. I, p. 210].

[59]Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

[60]G. Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in *The Environmental Hand Book*, ed., G. De Bell (New York, 1970).

[61]Dewdney, *Annual Report*, 1880, p. 94.

[62]Cited in Turner, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 464.

[63]Evidence given before the select Senate Committee on Natural Food Products, 1887 (Schultz Papers, Public Archives of Manitoba, Misc. MSS II, pp. 16-17, 28).

[64]Material concerning the regulation of the fisheries is based largely on the diaries of F. C. Gilchrist. See D. H. Bocking, "The Gilchrist Diaries," *Saskatchewan History* XX, 3 (Autumn 1967), pp. 108-13.

[65]Report by S. J. Dawson, December 19, 1870, Archibald Papers, 153.

[66]Letter from Archdeacon Cowley, March 21, 1871, enclosing a letter from a Mr. Phair dated March 17, 1871, Archibald Papers, 226.

[67]The Gilchrist Diaries give a vivid impression of how much wood was needed.

[68]Colin Inkster, *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 30, 1934, in Inkster Papers, Public Archives of Manitoba.

[69]See, for example, Denny, *op. cit.*, p. 132, on a saw mill set up at Fort Macleod where "hundreds of spruce logs were cut and driven down to it from the hills some miles away."

[70]Royal to Archibald, Feb. 15, 1871, Archibald Papers, 193, 198 (original letter is in French); see also Chief Moosoo's complaint, *ibid.*, 150.

[71]Treaty No. 1 (124) in Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1891), Vol. I, pp. 282-84; Bradley correspondence with the Lieutenant-Governor, 1872, Archibald Papers, 586-89, 601, 603, 621, 622, 628, 632, 651, 652-54.

[72]Archibald Papers, 582, 583, 592, 593, 600, 650.

[73]Morris Papers, Ketcheson Collection, 243.

[74]John R. Craig, *Ranching with Lords and Commons* (Toronto, 1903; repr. 1971), p. 258.

[75]*Ibid.*, p. 293.

[76]*Ibid.*, p. 236.

[77]W. J. Healy, *Women of Red River* (Winnipeg, 1923), p. 150.

[78]Morris Papers, Ketcheson Collection, 50.

[79]Healy, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[80]Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, 1891, Vol. I, p. 283; Morris Papers, Ketcheson Collection, 133. Other attempts to secure large reserves were those of James Seenum (Chief Pakan) and Toma on behalf of Red Pheasant in the Fort Pitt and Fort Carlton Treaty negotiations. Toma asked for a grant of ten miles of land round the reserves in a belt (Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 186). Seenum's request for a large reserve led to subsequent long-drawn-out misunderstandings; the issue was not settled until 1884 (Erasmus MS, pp. 297, 299-300, 306-307). In the view of the Department of Indian Affairs, the "chief held for many years a very exaggerated idea of the quantity of land to which his band was entitled." (Report for the year 1884, xlvi).

[81]See correspondence of Bishop Grandin, C. F. Wm. J. Christie, and the Lieutenant-Governor in 1871, Archibald Papers, 523, 544, 559, 655.

[82]Memorandum re Treaty Ground at Fort Qu'Appelle and ensuing correspondence, Schultz Papers, Misc. MSS, II.

[83]Healy, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[84]Schultz to McDougall, 1869, Schultz Papers, Misc. MSS, III; and draft of letter to

Secretary of State re lands to be retained by the Hudson's Bay Company, March 29, 1873, VI, Correspondence, etc., 130.

[85]"The Great Spirit and not the Great Mother gave us this land" (Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 270).

[86]Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, 1891, Vol. II, p. 36.

[87]Treaties No. 1 and 2, 1871, *Ibid.*, pp. 282-85, 291-94.

[88]Archibald Papers, 573.

[89]Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

[90]Denny, *op. cit.*, pp. 138, 143, 168-69, 195-96, 200.

[91]*Ibid.*, p. 102; Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 188, 193, 195, 228, 236, 241, 258-59, 267-68, 271.

[92]*Ibid.*, p. 267.

[93]*Ibid.*, p. 195.

[94]F. C. Gilchrist, Diaries 1859-1896, Saskatchewan Archives, Regina, Personal Papers, A/382; Bocking, *op. cit.*

[95]Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1972), p. 134.

[96]*Edmonton Bulletin*, January 17, 1881.

[97]John McDougall, "The Future of the Indians of Canada . . . , a Paper read before the Missionary Convention at Edmonton, *Methodist Magazine and Review* (March 1905), pp. 244-48.

[98]The papers of the late V. F. Fowke. It is possible that the Plains Indians had moved from an attempt at agricultural life back to a wandering life for this reason on the coming of the horse.

[99]A phrase used by Archdeacon Cowley with reference to contacts between the aboriginal peoples and incoming white settlers (Archibald Papers, 282).

[100]Lucien M. Hanks and Jane Richardson, *Tribe Under Trust: A Study of the Blackfoot Reserve of Alberta* (Toronto, 1950), Ch. 2.

[101]McDougall, in *Methodist Magazine and Review* (March 1905), pp. 245-46.

[102]Quoted in Denny, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[103]Evidence given before the Select Committee of the Senate on Natural Food Products, Schultz Papers, Misc. MSS, II, 61.

[104]Hanks, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-65.

[105]See A. S. Morton and Chester Martin, *History of Prairie Settlement* (Toronto, 1938), pp. 237-38. Concern about problems arising in connection with the Halfbreed land grant is evident in the Archibald, Morris, and Schultz Papers. See, for example, Archibald Papers, 740.

[106]On this see George F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (London, 1936; 2nd ed., Toronto, 1960, 1963).

[107]Sandison, 1914, Schultz Papers, Box Ia, Misc. MSS, I.

[108]Denny, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

3 ETHNICITY AND THE PRAIRIE ENVIRONMENT: PATTERNS OF OLD COLONY MENNONITE AND DOUKHOBOR SETTLEMENT

C. J. TRACIE

In view of the current increasing interest in the history and culture of a wide variety of ethnic and religious groups, geographers have an increased responsibility in providing information and analysis from the geographic perspective. For the rural settlement geographer these concerns revolve around the interaction between the settler and the environment, and the expression of this interaction in the process of settlement and in the patterns of settlement produced. One must consider on the one hand the impact of variations in the settlers' customs, beliefs and values on their location in, and organization of, space, and on the other, the physical and social environment which influenced settlement decision-making. Much has been made of the action of man in molding a variety of "natural" landscapes into distinctive cultural landscapes.[1] In the agricultural settlement of the Canadian west, however, of the many groups participating in creating a mosaic of ethnic communities, each distinct in varying ways, few created truly unique cultural landscapes. Of particular interest, then, are those groups whose size and desirability allowed them to extract certain concessions from the government which allowed them to give expressions to their beliefs and practices in the landscape they produced.

Two such groups were the Old Colony Mennonites and the Doukhobors. Both came in groups large enough to warrant the government allowing them to settle *en bloc,* and both began to mold the natural landscape into a distinctive cultural landscape. Their adjacent location in Russia and some similarity in belief also allow a comparison of the influence of these factors on the initiation, maintenance or decline of the unique aspects of their settlement.

It is the purpose of this paper to describe briefly the initiation and development of the distinctive settlements of these groups and to follow this with an analysis of the varying interactions between the groups and the new environment they encountered. The emphasis on the factors involved in the interaction between the group and the environment and on the nature of this interaction is seen to be valuable not only in understanding the process of Doukhobor and Mennonite settlement, but in providing stimulus and possible direction for the study of other ethnic or religious groups.

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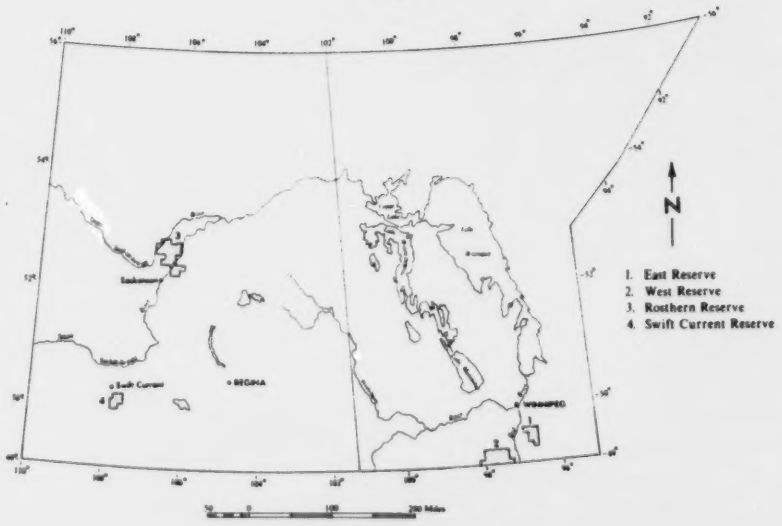
THE OLD COLONY MENNONITES[2]

The fortuitous coincidence of a desire for emigration on the part of the Russian Mennonites, brought to a head by threatened compulsory military consciption and growing numbers of landless members, and the desire for large groups of settlers to occupy the empty lands of the Canadian west on the part of the Canadian government resulted in the movement to Manitoba of some 7,000 Mennonites between 1874 and 1881. They came under special conditions[3] to special reserves set aside for their sole use, and under a special amendment to the Dominion Lands Act, were allowed to maintain their traditional form of settlement. Initially, one reserve was set aside for them in Manitoba (the East reserve) consisting of eight townships. Additional reserves were set aside in 1876 (the West Reserve) 1895 (the Rosthern reserve) and 1904 (the Swift Current reserve). (See Figure 1.)

Under the special provisions of the Hamlet Clause of the Dominion Lands Act, the Mennonites were allowed to recreate the agricultural village type of settlement in this new environment.[4] The major characteristics of this type of settlement were the street-village (Strassendorf) and the open-field system of farming. The village was composed of farmsteads on their 2-3 acre rectangular lots facing one another across a broad central street, creating a distinctive agglomerated but elongated settlement in the midst of the village land. The farm system consisted of a pooling of the individual quarters of land held by the village occupants, and the subdivision of these pooled lands or *Flur* into several large fields (*Gewanne*) of similar land quality, and the further subdivision of these fields into strips

Figure 1



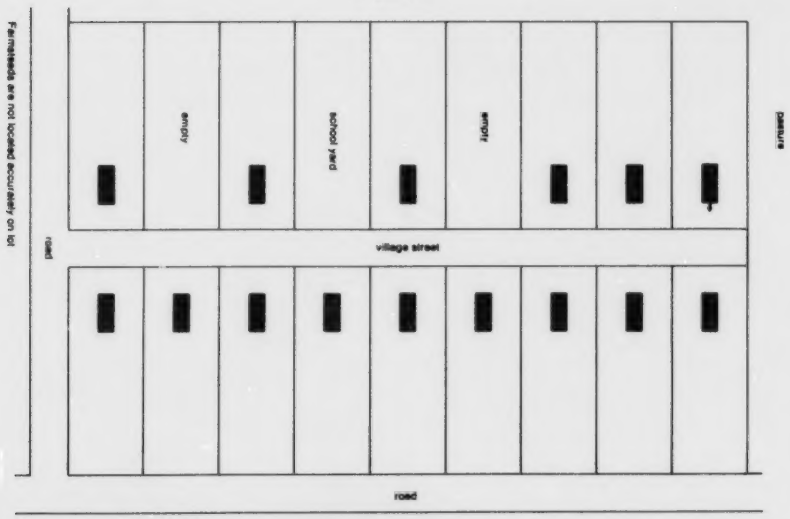
Location of the Mennonite Reserves

(*Kagel*), the number of strips in each field corresponding to the number of families or landholders in the village. This too created distinctive patterns in the landscape although the marks of this system are seen only faintly today in some of the best preserved sites. In the East reserve, the "model" form of the street-village was disrupted by the physical environment so that many of the villages were oriented at odd angles and many had only a single row of farmsteads facing the street. In the remainder of the reserves, however, most of the villages were cardinally oriented and consisted of the traditional double row of farmsteads (see Figure 2). Fifty-eight villages were established in the East reserve, 65 in the West reserve, 17 in the Rosthern reserve and 15 in the Swift Current reserve, although not all the villages were occupied at any one time.

Another distinctive feature of the Mennonite settlements were the connected house-barn combinations, here fabricated in wood rather than the more common brick or stone of Russia. These units consisted of the dwelling and barn either built under one roof, or attached with or without a connecting passageway in a variety of orientations (see Figures 3 and 4).

In the more recently-settled reserves of Saskatchewan the form and style of the village settlement has persisted to the present, although there are no evidences remaining of the open-field system in the landscape, and the distinctive house-barn combinations are being dismantled or detached rather rapidly (see Figure 5).

Figure 2



Neuenlage Village Plan (1895), Rosthern Reserve
(part of SE 23 Twp. 40, Range 4, West 3rd)
Source: Adapted from Leo Driedger, *A Sect in Modern Society* . . . , Unpublished M.A. Thesis, U. of Chicago, 1955, p. 22.

THE DOUKHOBORS[5]

The Doukhobors were an immigrant group quite similar in many respects to the Mennonites. Before their removal to the Caucasus, they lived in the same area of south Russia as the Mennonites; they lived in similar settlements; and they were brought to a decision to emigrate by persecution arising from their refusal to bear arms. As the Canadian government was attempting to fill the still-empty lands west of Manitoba, concessions were again negotiated to attract this large group of proven agriculturalists to the west. The concessions granted to the Doukhobors were broadly similar to those granted to the Mennonites: reserved land, exemption from military duty and a re-application of the Hamlet Clause which allowed them to settle in villages. The agreement under which the Doukhbors came was not, unfortunately, spelled out in detail, and the vagueness of the conditions and misunderstandings on both sides, especially in the matter of land regulations, were to have significant ramifications for the success of the settlements they created.

Negotiations between the government and the Doukhobor representatives were completed in 1898, and in the first six months of 1899 approximately 7400 Doukhobors emigrated to Canada.[6] Their final destination was three blocks of land which had been reserved for their sole use; the North or Thunder Hill Reserve, the South Reserve (with annex), and the Prince Albert or Saskatchewan Reserve (see Figure 6). Over the next

Figure 3

Mennonite House-barn Combination
Letkemann brothers' farmstead, Hochfeldt (Rosthern Reserve)

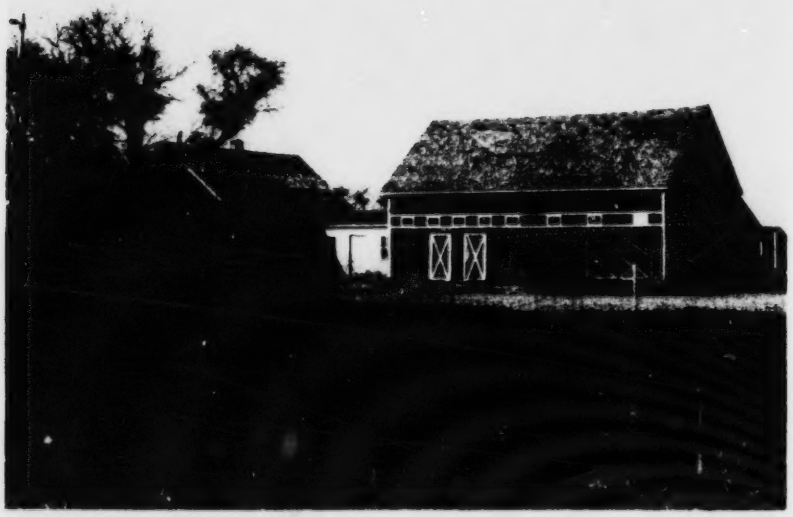
decade, 63 villages were constructed by the Doukhobors in the three reserves, although, as with the Mennonites, not all were inhabited at any one time. The form of these villages was very similar to that of the Mennonites, based on the street-village that was a common heritage. There were more variations from the traditional model among the Doukhobors however, in the orientation of the villages, lot size, building placement on the lots, and in regularity of form. (See Figures 7-9.)

The communal system of farming practised by the Doukhobors with their large undivided fields produced a cultivated landscape differing from both the strip fields of the Mennonites and the isolated, small fields of the individual settler.

The structures erected by the Doukhobors were also distinctive in form and detail. The traditional pattern brought from Russia was modified initially by the availability of building materials[7] but the permanent dwellings and larger structures exhibited considerable stylistic uniformity. (See Figures 10, 11.)

> In architecture, as in other instances, they [Doukhobors] are as yet absolutely insensible to Western influences. Their houses, built on either side of a wide street, are of unsawn timbers covered with clay, painted white and ornamented with yellow dados. The roof tops project and form verandahs ornamented with carved woodwork. . . . They intend when they become more prosperous to replace these exotic-looking buildings with larger ones of stone.[8]

Figure 4



Mennonite House-barn Combination
Southwest of Hague (Rosthern Reserve)

> The village — when I presently arrived at it — proved a surprising place, with strange, foreign-looking and picturesque houses having walls plastered with mud, but with a note of distinction in the disposition of the timbering, in the shaping of the windows, and in the gable ends of the heavy vegetating roofs. Moreover, the eye was grateful for variations of detail in the several structures, no two being exactly alike, though all were affected by common principles of structure and design — all, at least, save a central meeting-place in prim brickwork, which was a civilized eyesore in that setting of primitive architecture.[9]

Although the form of the village has been eradicated almost completely, a few remaining isolated structures give witness to the distinctive settlements created 75 years ago. (See Figure 12.)

GROUP-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION: THE GROUP

Having briefly sketched the major elements of the cultural landscapes of these two groups I would like to consider some of the elements of the interaction between the group and their new environment in more detail. This discussion is designed to clarify the operation of several group and environmental factors in the initiation, development and decline of these distinctive cultural landscapes.

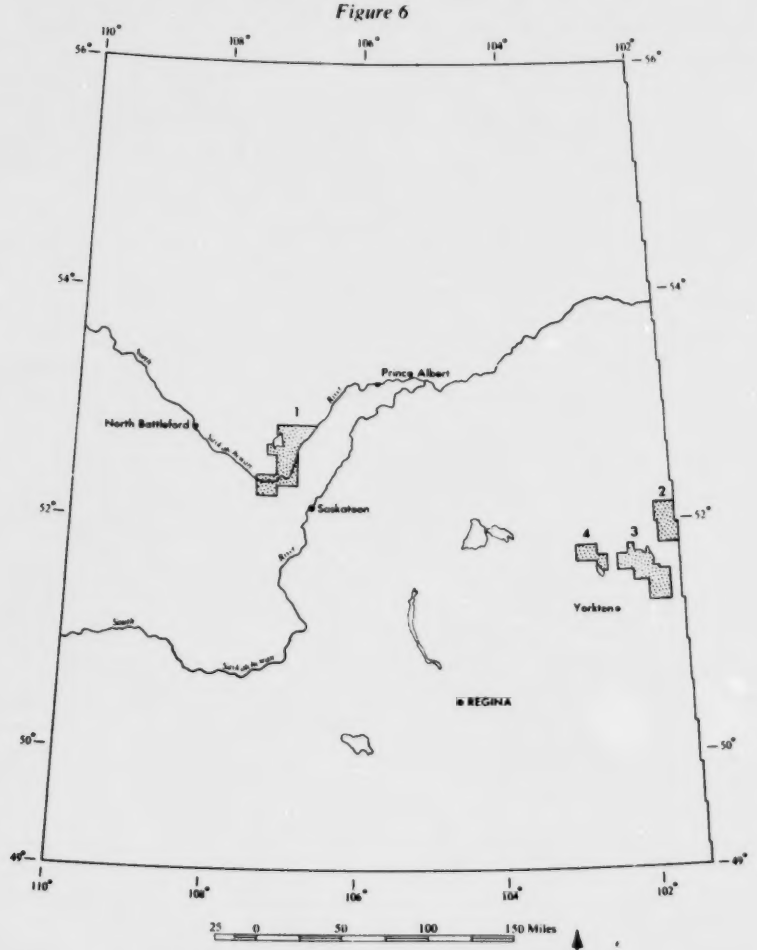
Those factors considered under the heading of the group revolve around the common beliefs, practices and values of an ethnic/religious group which have found expression in the form and pattern of their settle-

Figure 5

Mennonite House-barn Combination being Dismantled
Neuhorst (Rosthern Reserve)

ment. For example, the choice of the location for the reserves may be explained in terms of the varying perceptions of these groups as to what constituted desirable land and a desirable location. A common explanation for the varying perceptions of what is "desirable" land hinges on similarities in the landscape of the new land and the former homeland, that is, the settler or group will choose land that they perceive as similar to the land they have left.[10] This explanation not only recognizes the impact of a

Figure 6



1. Prince Albert Colony
2. North (Thunder Hill) Colony
3. South Colony
4. South Colony - Devil's Lake Annex

Location of the Doukhobor Reserves

Figure 7

Doukhobor Village of Bodenofka (Prince Albert Colony)
(from the original village plan, Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon)

psychological element in the decision-making process (i.e. familiarity, at-homeness) but also the hard economic fact that experience gained in a similar environment will allow the settler to "control" his new environment more effectively. It is tempting to explain the location of the first Mennonite reserves in the same way. Having become accustomed to the steppes of southern Russia, and knowing "how to strike living water from level ground, how to build comfortable huts and how to heat them, too, without a stick of wood" and "how to plant shelter belts for protection against the icy winds of the northern plains," what more natural conclusion than that of the Mennonites seeking a similar environment in the Canadian west, thus choosing prairie lands in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan?[11]

There are at least two problems with such explanations however. First, there is the possibility that the choice of similar land may have been made for entirely different reasons, or at least that these other reasons may have been dominant. Considering the traditional desire of the Mennonites to avoid contamination by the "world" it seems reasonable to suggest that the prairie lands of southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan were chosen for their isolation as much as for their similarity to the homeland.[12] The correspondence relating to the choice of land south of Swift Current appears to indicate that the Mennonites deliberately chose poor land so

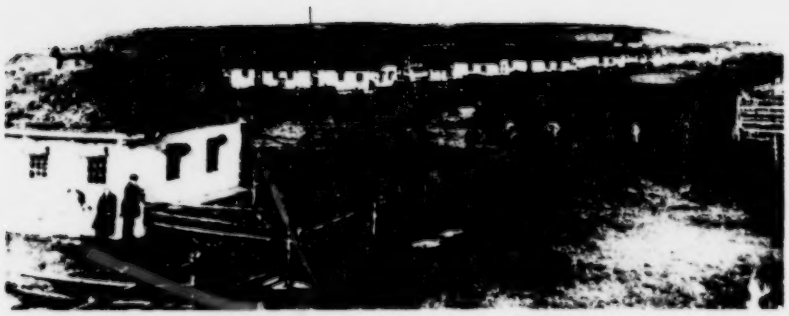
Figure 8

Doukhobor Village of Blagovishennie (South Colony)
(from the original village plan, Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon)

Figure 9

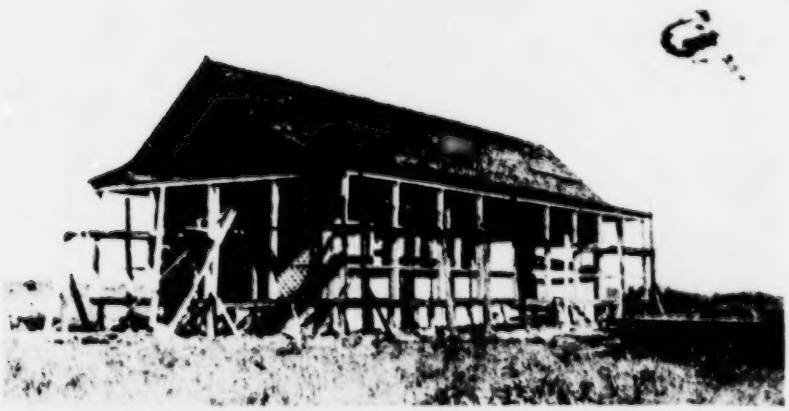
Doukhobor Village of Ootishennie (Devil's Lake Annex)
(from the original village plan, Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon)

Figure 10



"Doukhobor Village near Veregin, Saskatchewan" (early 1900's)
Uniformity of style is apparent in the dwellings of this village.
A departure is seen in the larger, communal structures near the center of the village.
(photograph by Dr. T. V. Simpson, courtesy of the Alberta-Glenbow Institute, Calgary)

Figure 11



"School House being Erected by Doukhobors just Outside their Village near Canora" (c. 1906)
From what can be ascertained from contemporary evidence and surviving structures, this is the style employed by the Doukhobors of eastern Saskatchewan for their prayer homes, larger communal structures and many of the dwellings.
(photograph courtesy of the Alberta-Glenbow Institute, Calgary)

they would not be bothered by the pressure of expanding settlement into the area.[13] The choice of land in the Rosthern reserve and in other areas (e.g. La Crete, Alberta) seem to lend weight to the proposal as in both areas the wooded environment was unlike the previous location yet both were isolated from the main body of settlement at the time they were chosen.

A second problem with the general application of this explanation is that there is evidence to suggest that some groups, rather than choosing lands with environmental problems with which they were familiar, decided to eliminate some of the problems by choosing lands that supplied some of the deficiencies of the homeland. In the case of the Doukhobors, the desire for land with a good water supply and timber to build with was accentuated by the fact that in their former location, timber was scarce. Far from seeking a similar environment, then, they deliberately sought one that was quite different.[14]

The actual settlement form and pattern within the reserves most clearly indicate the impact of the group's traditions, beliefs and practices however. Both groups demanded large contiguous tracts of land where they could settle in compact units free from the fragmentation of their holdings by outsiders. As noted above, the settlement unit was the farm village, the basic form of which was transferred to Canada from Russia. On the part of the Mennonites, the retention of this form in their new environment appears to have rested in their traditional resistance to change, and

Figure 12

Prayer Home, Spaskoe Village (South Colony)
(photographed in May, 1975)

the desire to retain a form of settlement which would facilitate cooperation and administration. They had utilized this method of settlement successfully for almost 100 years in Russia; to maintain this form in the new environment was clearly desirable. The Doukhobors were much more strictly bound to a village type of settlement. Not only was the street-village traditional, but some form of compact settlement was essential in their adherence to the religious principle of communal life. Peter Verigin, their spiritual leader, established the framework for the new settlements by noting that they should be on a communal foundation and that the villages should be built "on the customary plan that you so well know."[15]

Whereas tradition and belief reinforced each other in the matter of settlement form, especially in the case of the Doukhobors, their influence on the individual elements of the settlements often took different directions. The connected house-barn was the traditional farmstead unit for both Mennonites and Doukhobors, yet the Mennonites recreated this form almost without exception in their villages, while only a few Doukhobor villages retained this form. Among the Mennonites there was no tension between tradition and belief; it had been their custom to erect structures of this sort and their beliefs and practices did not demand a change in this tradition in the new environment.[16] With the Doukhobors however a recent change from an individualistic to a communistic way of life based on a spiritual directive from their leader demanded a change from the traditional form.[17] According to the instructions given by Verigin "the absolute necessities like cattle, plows, and other implements as well as granaries and storehouses, grist mills, oil presses, blacksmith shops and woodworking shops, all these in the first years must be built by communal effort."[18] Crops and livestock, being communal property, were to be stored and housed in communal buildings. Consequently those villages heeding this admonition had no need for individual barns, attached or otherwise; only large communal barns and storehouses were built. In the villages of the Prince Albert colony, where it appears that the people viewed Verigin as somewhat less than a "living Christ," the traditional attached house-barn combinations were the norm as crops and livestock were owned individually.[19] These differences in belief also affected the interior arrangement of the villages. Village plans show a form organized around the central position of several large communal buildings in the eastern villages, but the Prince Albert colony villages appear to be more regular in plan with buildings uniform in size and orientation (see Figures 7 and 8).

The basic distinction between the individualism of the Mennonites and the communalism of the Doukhobors reinforced or weakened the influence of tradition in the built landscape. These differences also gave rise to distinctive cultivated landscapes. Both groups pooled their individual land allotments on a village basis to create a "super-farm" which was then divided according to the desires of the group. Being individualistic, the Mennonites allotted each family its fair share in each of the large fields created, thus giving rise to a distinctive strip pattern. The communal

Doukhobors recognized no individual land ownership so the large fields remained undivided and were farmed as one unit. Again both systems reflected the religious beliefs of the group. Although the pooling of land was voluntary with the Mennonites and was designed primarily to foster social cohesion, Francis has pointed out that it would have been impossible to retain such a system in the absence of sanctions having a distinctly religious connotation.[20]

These groups' beliefs, particularly in the matter of land tenure, were to bring about inter-group conflicts, and with the Doukhobors, conflicts with the government. In both cases, these difficulties brought about modification and sometimes complete eradication of original settlement patterns. The Mennonites had no religious qualms about individual ownership of land, or about pledging allegiance to the Crown, so there was no problem in registering and obtaining patents for individual quarter sections of land. They were only concerned with retaining the village form of agricultural settlement, which they were able to do by voluntary means within the framework of existing land policy. This latter was no problem during the initial years of settlement in Manitoba, but it was not long before economic advantage outweighed religious considerations in the eyes of some Mennonites, particularly those who had title to excellent arable land. Since the land was legally held under individual title, those wishing to sacrifice group approval for individual gain were not hindered legally in claiming their own land. Only a few such cases in a village seriously disrupted the whole functioning unit and the conservatives were forced to look elsewhere for land if they wished to persist in this type of settlement. The village type of settlement was abandoned fairly rapidly, then, depleted by individualists taking up their own land, and by the removal of the most conservative members who were forced to move elsewhere to recreate a similar system.[21] On the other hand, the conservatives who moved into Saskatchewan to form the Rosthern and Swift Current colonies were able by a very early abandonment of the open-field system[22] to retain the village form of settlement which they viewed as essential to their way of life. As a result of this successful compromise, the *Strassendorfer* persist in the landscape to the present, and in a few cases at least, appear to remain a viable form of settlement.

The religious views of the Doukhobors regarding communal ownership of land brought them into immediate conflict with government land policy which was designed around individual ownership. The Doukhobors at first refused even to apply for entry to the land which they were occupying. However when Verigin came to Canada in late 1902, he modified his previous instructions, suggesting that registration itself was only a formality; what was important was that they operate communally. This tactic delayed confrontation with the government for a few years. Most Doukhobors registered for their land individually, but farmed the land communually. When expanding settlement forced the government to take a closer look at the cultivation duties performed by the Doukhobors a

decision was made to require cultivation duties on each quarter section of land or the homestead entries would be cancelled.[23] Under this increasing pressure from the government many moved from their village residences to take up residence on their own land. When it became apparent that obtaining title to their land individually not only was a necessity but involved pledging allegiance to the Crown (which also was against their religious convictions as they did not recognize any earthly authority), the communal Doukhobors faced the same decision as had the conservative Mennonites in Manitoba. They had to choose either to abandon their beliefs or move elsewhere to preserve them. They chose to move to purchased privately-owned land in British Columbia.

We see then the same elements at work in the deterioration of the village settlements among the Doukhobors as among the Manitoba Mennonites. The more liberal members moved onto their own land; the conservatives were forced to move to retain their religious integrity. The result was the very rapid disappearance of the *Strassendorfer*. That this eradication was so complete rests on the fact that there was no compromise available. The Independents had in the main moved onto their own land before the communal Doukhobors left. For their part, the communal Doukhobors, under the existing land regulations, had no choice but to move to a new area. Consequently, there was no residue left in most of the villages to maintain them and they were very quickly dismantled or left to deteriorate. A potential exception to this pattern could have been the Prince Albert colony. They were the most individualistic, and were cooperative rather than communal in their agricultural system. They established villages on the traditional plan, and there seems to have been no reason why they could not have continued this form of settlement while farming their land individually. A possible reason is suggested by one of the members of the present Blaine Lake community.[24] Quite a number of the members of the Prince Albert colony were attracted to the communal way of life, or more particularly, to the person of Peter Verigin, when he came to Canada in 1902. These people left their villages and moved to the eastern colonies "to be with Petushka." They were very poorly treated by the Doukhobors there, presumably since they were regarded as "bad brothers" who had initially abandoned Peter's command regarding communal ownership of land. Many of these returned to the Prince Albert colony with such a distaste for anything smacking of the communal life, that they forthwith abandoned the village type of settlement since it reminded them of the constrictions of communal life.

GROUP-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION: THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment, both physical and social, which the Doukhobors confronted also had considerable influence on the development and decline of distinctive settlement patterns created by these groups. The role of the

physical environment has been alluded to above. Certain aspects of the landscape — vegetation, drainage, etc. — comprised the elements which were perceived and assessed in various ways according to the background, beliefs and desires of the group. The Mennonites appeared to be drawn to the grassland areas of southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan either because they were regarded as familiar and manageable or because they were regarded as a surrogate for isolation. The Doukhobors, too, sought for certain physical elements in the land they were to occupy, e.g., timber, water, etc., although they seem to have been more concerned with the immediate advantages of such features. In both cases then, but apparently for different reasons, each group was drawn to a certain kind of "natural" landscape.

The impact of the physical environment is apparent more clearly on variations in the pattern of settlement. Both the pattern and form of Mennonite settlements of the East reserve were modified by variations in topography, vegetation and drainage.[25] The villages tended to be less regular in form, as noted above, the site often allowing the development of only a single row of farmsteads along the street, rather than the more traditional double row. Many of the villages were oriented along streams or beach ridges as well. The field pattern was also fragmented; good and poor land were interspersed throughout the reserve, and fields tended to be fragmented by areas of unproductive land.[26] This situation also resulted in a somewhat more irregular distribution of settlements within the reserve as great care had to be taken to choose a village site which was central to a sufficient amount of arable land to support the village population. Some villages were abandoned owing to an unwise choice of site with respect to the surrounding land. In the West reserve however, where land was more uniform both in quality and terrain, the villages were more uniformly distributed, more regular in the recreation of the traditional form, and most exhibiting a cardinal orientation.

The Doukhobor villages were affected by the physical environment in a similar way, particularly in the orientation of the villages to lakes and streams. It appears from the village plans that certain modifications in the form of some of the villages were made as a result of local site conditions, although a detailed study of the village sites with the plans in hand would be required to detail this observation.

A major component of the general environment to which these groups came was the social milieu; the attitudes of both public and government toward these newcomers. Society in general appears to have accepted the Mennonites at face value; different, but valuable as agriculturalists and settlers. There was not too much about them to raise resentment except possibly their pacifism and their desire to maintain their own educational system, but these did not assume importance until much later. The government had no cause for concern. The Mennonites were law abiding, responsible citizens and were positively regarded as successful and innovative farmers, models to be set up before intending settlers, in much the

same way as they had been in Russia. In the main, then, the social environment seems to have had little impact on their initial settlements — they were left to pursue their own ends.

Doukhobor settlement, on the other hand, was influenced by public opinion and government policy from the outset. Although the influence of physical factors in the choice of reserve land has been noted above, the actual location of land having these components was directly related to the social climate of the time. Aylmer Maude, an Englishman who acted as an interpreter for the Doukhobor delegation, detailed the matter:

> The conditions of the problem were these: the Doukhobors wished to settle as a compact community, with lands as much as possible together. . . . Other important considerations in selecting the land were: to secure a good water supply, and timber to build with, and not to be too far from a railway. . . . The first locality we inspected was in the district near Edmonton. . . . A most promising location not far from Beaver Lake was selected where we wished to take up twelve "townships" of thirty-six square miles each, and where the whole Doukhobor community might have settled contiguously. But, after our return to Ottawa, this arrangement was upset. . . . The Liberal Government was making efforts to find immigrants to take up the unoccupied land of the North-West Territories; so the Conservative Opposition was ready and eager to note and exaggerate everything unfavourable about such immigrants and to use, as a weapon wherewith to attack the Government, any prejudice that could be aroused against them. . . . As a result, an opposition to the location of the Doukhobors in the Edmonton district sprang up; pressure was brought to bear on the Government, and, when we thought all had been favourably settled, we learnt that we could not have the land we had selected. The search had to be recommenced in other, less tempting, parts of the country.[27]

Instead of this favourable location for the reserve being chosen, attention was directed to other areas where physical conditions were untested, and were therefore mainly unsettled.[28] These locations were far enough from the main body of settlement not to arouse local dissatisfaction. Concern was also expressed in the Senate about the impact of the placement of the Doukhobors on subsequent settlement. The Honourable Mr. Boulton (Marquette) said, ". . . that we should go to enormous expense to bring foreigners in and place them on the soil, leaving the odd numbered sections of land between them, so that our own people cannot settle in among them or perhaps will not be made comfortable to settle among them . . . is a mistake."[29]

The public's view as to what constituted an acceptable social distance between them and foreign immigrants appears to have been related to how "foreign" they were perceived to be. The Doukhobors, with their strange clothing and practices, were perceived to be very foreign indeed. The press labelled them as "Sifton's pets" and one outspoken member of the Senate referred to them as "the refuse of Russia."[30] Society, already alarmed at

the prospect of the West becoming dominated by "foreigners" at the expense of the more desirable British, Canadian, and American settlers, wanted these strange people as far away from existing settlement as possible. Also, considerable pressure was created to have the government apply the letter of the law in matters of homestead regulations. This of course made it very difficult for the government to exercise much flexibility in their land dealings with the Doukhobors, and ultimately culminated in the abandonment of the village type of settlement.

The role of the government as part of the new environment which the two groups encountered might be designated either as that of a villain, or that of a much-tried, would-be benefactor. The Mennonites were quite contented with the government. The concessions granted to them were honored and they reciprocated by abiding by the policies of the government, a course of action made easier by the fact that there was no direct conflict between government policy and their beliefs. They had always maintained good relations with the Russian government, and they were dedicated to cooperation with the Canadian government as much as possible. The Doukhobors had a quite different view of government in general and the Canadian government in particular. Earthly authority was seen to have no hold on the actions of the group, and, where it contradicted the religious principles of the group, it was to be vigorously resisted. It is quite likely that even with the generous terms offered by the Canadian government they were suspicious of it, and when the government began demanding commitments in matters of registration and land tenure, which they argued were contrary to the spirit of the negotiated terms, they began to view the government as a tyrannical oppressor. It appeared to some sympathetic observers that the government was at least acting in an ambivalent manner, seemingly encouraging or condoning communal settlement by certain concessions, then abruptly reverting to a strict observance and application of the land policy.[31] On its part, the government was plagued by pilgrimages, nude demonstrations and arson by those it sought to help (although involving only a fraction of the total group) on the one hand, and on the other, was under considerable public pressure to make these foreigners conform to the law of the land without any special concessions.

The increasing pressure brought to bear by the government on the Doukhobors[32] brought about two diverse reactions. For some this pressure resulted in yielding to government terms with subsequent movement from the villages to individual parcels of land. For others, the pressure hardened their resistance to the government and its policies, and made any compromise that might have been attempted impossible. The lines were clearly drawn; neither could compromise. Most of the communal Doukhobors abandoned their villages and moved to British Columbia. The pattern of settlement which had been slowly eroded by the movement of the Independents to their own land began a rather rapid eradication in Saskatchewan, and was completely modified in its transferral to the new environment of British Columbia.

CONCLUSION

In this paper an attempt has been made to draw out and analyze pertinent elements of the man-environment interaction which have been influential in the initiation and development of the distinctive cultural landscapes of two ethnic/religious groups. Two major points stand out. First, in the examination of the interaction between these groups and the environment, it appears that group traditions and values are dominant. They structured the group's perception of the physical elements of the new environment, dictated the basic form and pattern of the settlements they created, determined their attitudes toward the new social environment, and, to a large extent, determined or influenced public and government attitudes toward them. Second, and closely related to the first, is the degree to which group values (beliefs) outweighed all other considerations.

In both groups these values originally reinforced the traditional form of village settlement. The Mennonites were able to recreate these settlements without significant modification, while their belief in communal living forced modifications of some of the details of Doukhobor settlement. Further, the beliefs of the Mennonites allowed them to perpetuate the village settlement within the framework of government land policy, whereas the Doukhobors were forced by their beliefs to abandon their villages. In fact, the increased resolve to live communally which the confrontation in Saskatchewan seems to have produced, resulted in a completely changed form of settlement in British Columbia. It is by a consideration of these factors, then, that the initiation of a unique form of settlement, the persistence of this form in the Old Colony Mennonite settlements in Saskatchewan, and the nearly complete eradication of Old Colony Mennonite settlement in Manitoba and Doukhobor village settlement in Saskatchewan can be understood.

FOOTNOTES

[1]E. J. Taaffe, "The Spatial View in Context," *Annals*, 64 (1974), 5.

[2]In this paper hereafter referred to simply as Mennonites. A good general work on the Old Colony Mennonites is C. W. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites* (Baltimore, 1969). F. H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus* (Altona, 1962), and E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia* (Altona, 1955) relate the emigration from Russia, the latter specifically concerned with the Manitoba Mennonites.

[3]Francis, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

[4]Most of the following material on the form of Mennonite settlement is based on J. Warkentin, "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements of Southern Manitoba," *Geographical Review*, 49 (1959), 342-68.

[5]Two excellent general sources in English are J. F. C. Wright, *Slava Bohu* (New York, 1940), and George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, *The Doukhobors* (London, 1968). Personal evaluations and reminiscences of the initial Doukhobor settlements are found in James Mavor, *My Window on the Street of the World*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1923); Aylmer Maude, *A Peculiar People* (London, 1905); and Joseph Elkington, *The Doukhobors* (Philadelphia, 1903). Much of the material on the details of Doukhobor settlement form is abbreviated from a paper presented at the Western Division conference of the Canadian Association of Geographers at Lethbridge, Alberta (March 1974) entitled "Ethnicity and Settlement in Western Canada: Doukhobor Village Settlement in Saskatchewan."

[6]Woodcock and Avakumovic, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[7]E. Thorsteinson, "The Doukhobors in Canada," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 4 (June 1917), 30; K. J. Tarasoff, *A Pictorial History of the Doukhobors* (Saskatoon, 1969), p. 29.
[8]A. G. Bradley, *Canada in the 20th Century* (London, 1905), pp. 298-99.
[9]A. E. Copping, *Canada Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1911), pp. 103-104.
[10]For example see E. Van Cleef, "The Problem of Scientific Settlement as illustrated by the Finns," *Proceedings*, International Geographical Congress (Paris, 1931), pp. 281-87; Karl J. Pelzer, "Review of Heinz Lehmann's 'Zur Karte des Deutschtums in den Kanadischen Prairie-provinzen,'" *Geographical Review*, 30 (1940), 487. A similar view was expressed by J. Lehr in a paper presented to the Western Division conference of the Canadian Association of Geographers at Lethbridge, Alberta, 1974, entitled "Factors Affecting the Settlement Behaviour of Ukrainian Pioneers in Western Canada."
[11]Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
[12]*Ibid.*, p. 75.
[13]Sifton to Governor-General-in-Council, August 9, 1904, Department of the Interior (Dominion Lands Branch), File No. 917620 (Microfilm).
[14]Another example in a different context is offered about the desire of the Ukrainian settlers for stony land as their homeland was deficient in this commodity for building purposes. T. Dudar, Saskatoon, to the author.
[15]Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-33.
[16]Woodcock and Avakumovic, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
[17]Wright, *idem.*
[18]Some would say that the physical environment indeed reinforced this tradition. See Eric Arthur and Dudley Witney, *The Barn: A Vanishing Landmark in North America* (Toronto, 1973), p. 143.
[19]J. Rhoads, "*A Day With the Dukohobors*" [*sic*] (Philadelphia, 1900 [?]), p. 7.
[20]Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
[21]See Warkentin, *op. cit.*, for a more complete account of the village breakup in Manitoba.
[22]It has been impossible to determine how widespread open-field cultivation was in Saskatchewan and when it was abandoned in those villages in which it was practised. In the village of Neuanlage, the practice apparently was abandoned "very early." P. Peters, Neuanlage, to the author.
[23]For a detailed account of these proceedings see *Papers Relating to the Holding of Homestead Entries by Members of the Doukhobor Community* (Ottawa, 1907).
[24]P. Bludoff, Blaine Lake, to the author.
[25]Warkentin, *op cit.*, p. 348.
[26]Francis, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.
[27]Maude, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.
[28]Mavor's account cites his own influence as the reason for the choice of lands "as near as possible to the northern limits of practicable settlement." Mavor, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.
[29]*Debates of the Senate*, April 26, 1899, p. 213.
[30]*Debates of the Senate*, March 29, 1901, p. 170.
[31]Mavor, *idem.*
[32]Tracie, *op. cit.* (See footnote 5, above.)

4 CIRCUMFERENCE OF ABSENCE: LAND AND SPACE IN THE POETRY OF THE CANADIAN PLAINS

LAURENCE R. RICOU

"To touch this land with words," insists Rudy Wiebe, "requires an architectural structure; to break into the space of the reader's mind with the space of this western landscape and the people in it you must build a structure of fiction like an engineer builds a bridge or a skyscraper over and into space. A poem, a lyric, will not do."[1] And who could argue? The Canadian prairie is known for, not to say through, its novelists; "very few poets," echoes Donald Stephens, "have sought the prairies as their landscape."[2] But if there are few prairie poets, there are many prairie poems. They can be found, of course, in the lyrical passages which resonate through the pages of the fiction—most readily in W. O. Mitchell, in Wallace Stegner, in Patricia Blondal, in the novels of Wiebe himself. Yet increasingly it seems that a poem, a lyric, in and of itself, will indeed *do*. George Woodcock recognizes Dale Zieroth, John Newlove, Sid Marty, and Andrew Suknaski as a group who "have been creating a poetry appropriate to prairie land and prairie life."[3] These, and others less prominent, are trying not to break up space, like Wiebe's novelists, with huge design, but to encompass space in song.

The sense of space seems essential; land and nature are of less direct importance to the singer than to the story-teller. The poet reaches particularly for the emotion of the place, for its metaphysic, its aesthetic. He doesn't have the space for extensive descriptions of topography, vegetation and animal life, though these are the cause of his distinctive imagery. The geographer, J. Howard Richards, focusses on two features which define the prairie region: isolation and physical homogeneity, "visible," Richards notes, "not only in soils and vegetation but also in climate, geology and terrain."[4] Notwithstanding Milton Wilson's caution to Canadians to suspect geographical analogies, I suggest that these gross characteristics of prairie nature, separateness and uniformity of landscape and climate, are responsible for the importance of space in poems from the prairie. Putting space into the confines of a poem seems to be a key concern, conscious or otherwise, of the poet. Significantly Wilson tempers his own caution with a quotation from James Reaney, a poet who spent several years in Winnipeg: "the moment you start thinking about the history of the land's shape you start to think of a poem."[5]

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The history of this land's shape begins in the poetry and the symbolism of the Plains Indians. The vast circle of the prairie horizon has its reflection in the Medicine Wheel, in the wigwam, in the council circle, and in the Sun Dance: images of harmony, order, and union with nature. The circle determines perception and is at the heart of all the stories of the Plains Indians:

> The Medicine Wheel Circle is the Universe. It is change, life, death, birth and learning. This Great Circle is the lodge of our bodies, our minds, and our hearts. It is the cycle of all things that exist. The Circle is our Way of Touching, and of experiencing Harmony with every other thing around us.[6]

But when Henry Kelsey, by absurdly writing the introduction to the *Journal* of 1691 in rhymed couplets, becomes the first English language prairie poet, he can find no such appropriately cosmic image to touch this land; later in the *Journal* he finds the plains "barren" and "dry" but the only vastness is that of economic opportunity.[7] Versified reporting on western economic potential may have a place but most poets of the prairie have other interests and, certainly, can expect no material gains from their writing. They are amateurs and newspaper poets, in amazingly large numbers, untutored, prodigal and ever enthusiastic. Their subject may be mosquitoes as well as meadowlarks, spittoons as well as space. Reading through the many volumes (Watters's *Checklist* would suggest there are well over one hundred) one can soon predict the thematic categories: imperialism, our boys in the war, medievalism and dream visions, religious and moral platitudes, dialect ballads and poems from the "kitchen window" school. No doubt, as one gallant woman apologized, "the rhythm [is] uneven, the rhyming oft crude."[8] But the energetic folk poet is unlikely to be daunted as the defiant parenthesis in Hugh Duddridge's "The Rime of the Bucking Binder" indicates:

> The crazy things that binder does
> Would fairly make you stagger;
> Loose sheaves in perfect cascades fall,
> A miniature Niagar.
>
> (I can't dig up a staggering rhyme
> With my poetic trowel,
> And so Niagara appears
> Without the final vowel.)[9]

However Duddridge's rhymes stagger such verse is, in an important sense, the voice of the people. I for one am convinced that the homespun poets deserve more attention than either the scope or theme of this paper will allow.

For example, as the categories I have listed confirm, prairie nature is a much less frequent subject than one might expect. When it does appear it is as often a religious as an aesthetic matter. Robert Stead, whose prairie is

the image of the "Infinite Giver," might serve as the folk poets' spokesman:

> The Prairie is broad, unmolested,
> It points to the high and sublime;
> Where only the sky is above you,
> And only the distance in view,
> With no one to jostle or shove you—
> It's there a man learns to be true![10]

And no less an inspirer of sublime verse than Rudyard Kipling would add:

> Now I possess and am possessed of the land where I would be,
> And the curve of half earth's generous breast shall soothe and ravish me.[11]

But this prairie as mistress, mother and God holds little attraction for recent poets whose concern is to express the particularity of the prairie and its experiences through an exploration of the fullest potential of language. Nor, curiously enough, considering its apparent spaciousness, does hyperbole, such as Kipling employs when the prairie becomes half of the earth. The plains, I think, are too big to be matched by hyperbole; if anything the subtle spaciousness of understatement is the norm. The "thin grey wai/tress" droning the bill-of-fare in Earle Birney's "De-Composition" points the feeling, as does the abrupt opening of Eli Mandel's "Departure":

> There was merely a brief note:
> "Have seen Edmonton
> am leaving at once."

But the extension provided by understatement is not obviously linked to a specific regional poetry. Certainly "all poetry," as Browning observed, "is the problem of putting the infinite within the finite."[12] The prairie poet, like any other, will have at his service all the usual devices of compression, and will attempt to integrate them to create, or recreate, the complexity of a particular experience. The diction, for example, seems to reinforce the experience of space which originates in the isolation and homogeneity of landscape. Dorothy Livesay's title *Plainsongs* suggests the link between landscape, the simplicity of the people and the necessary simplicity of the language. Plain folk, so tradition has it, speak forthrightly, tersely and directly. Most of the poems seem to be in touch with the tradition. The diction, in general, is ordinary, informal and relatively imprecise. It is vague enough and accessible enough to touch the spacious. Even Eli Mandel, using a more unusual language, recognizes the attraction

of the theme. His "Saskatchewan Surveyor" tries to read the language of the land:

> at a correction line
> he reads the wind's grammar
>
> rhetoric falls from trees
>
> in a simple sentence of land
> a disappointed syntax[13]

Man understands the elemental force of the wind, is impressed with the tree's perhaps artificial oratory, but the land, the space, defies expression. Just as the straight line survey will not fit the curvature of the earth and must be altered at the correction line, so the simple sentence must be disrupted to encompass the sense of space. But however diction, syntax, or rhythm complements the poems I will discuss, they are not sufficient to express the physical presence of space which seems so persistent.

A physical sense of space depends most obviously on the poet's images. The sea is the most predictable image; it has found equal favour with Charles Mair, who enthused at the "vast ocean's paraphrase" in *Tecumseh*, and Elizabeth Brewster, whose "Train journey" crosses "an inland sea." Less usual and more intriguing is the use of sky as an image of space. Earle Birney's "on the night jet," for example, begins by seeing the Saskatchewan towns below as "small waffle-irons glowing/on a huge farm-house stove."[14] Car lights on the highways look like "electroscopic genes," but most noticeable are the "stars/of farms." With this last image the observer finds that he has sky above and sky below; both are "remote" and leave man lost in space. The progression of the images, too, — from the comfortable space of kitchen to the inner space probed in the laboratory to the outer space beyond earth — is an expansive factor in a tersely compact poem.

Peter Stevens is another poet with a particular flair for the sequence of images which will bring space into the poem. He turns to images in his "Prairie: Time and Place" on the premise that if "we can't comprehend the prairie" we can "feel it."[15] The feeling originates in cold flesh, leaning aspens and the "wind's reach for the sky," itself an image extending through vast space. In such a landscape, mental as well as physical, "we grope for firmness." It might be found in the railroad stitching "towns/along straight lines" or in trucks bouncing "over gravel ruts," but both images in context suggest not certainty but the call of distance and the breaking down of communications. The poem moves from winter to spring and summer, and then, as the cycles accelerate, through autumn "dust" and winter "snow" to spring "mud" and summer "dirt" in five short lines. As the seasonal cycles speed up the tendency is to abolish time, leaving a presiding sense of space. Through these "tentative" images the poet moves from no comprehension of the space to a hesitant understanding which consists in the determined attempt to love the "outrageous flats" which are both indispensable and impossible to deny. But as in Birney's poem man, between the flats and the "huge sky," is inevitably puny.

Stevens's poem is typical, too, for its colours. The prairie poet prefers much light, little colour, and those usually pale, and much white. The "ease of greenness" is remote and awaited; the red of the grain elevators, like the "white names," is presumably flaking away. The abrupt contrast of black shadows across "bleached fields" is more usual. The presiding tone inheres in the images of whitish frail "aspens," "bone," "brush," "gravel," "mud" and "dust." As George Bowering observes "the prairie/makes men brown."[16]

If the colouration of "Prairie: Time and Place" is typical the imagery seems to me unusual in another sense. Prairie poets seem to prefer images of sight and sound, senses which can operate at a distance and are therefore more likely to suggest space. In "cold testing flesh," in the sun's parching "minds to dry bone," in the "huddled brush," flying "dust" and "wind-skinned snow" Stevens uses images involving the contact senses of touch and taste, images which are as effective in bringing the observer into the scene as they are rare.

With Birney's "night jet," as with Stevens's "tracks" and "trucks," the prairie poem often depends on images of travel and wandering. There is so much distance to be covered, distance which beckons and yet can never be embraced. "Ahead of us," Dale Zieroth finds, moving by car "Across Canada, West from Toronto," "a country/forever too large for one man's mind; behind us,/more of the same." Patrick Lane is the poet-hitchhiker in "Saskatchewan," shivering as he tries to light a cigarette, endlessly searching for a long ago love:

> As the land retreats
> there's nothing to touch,
> nothing to hold onto.

Milton Wilson has suggested that the "nomadic culture of contemporary North America makes the wandering poet the norm."[17] Certainly his observation fits the poetry of western Canada: poetically it dictates the imagery of movement; biographically it verifies my earlier observation that there are prairie poems but not prairie poets. (Reaney, Birney, Bowering, Stevens, Zieroth have all lived on the prairie and are now living elsewhere.) Each has in a sense looked through Bowering's "cpr window":

> The night train
> across the prairies
> passes small villages
> with their few trees
> plowed snow of streets
> & is gone again
> into the next hundred miles
> of dark snow.[18]

The lights of the "small villages" are rare and diminished, yet somehow warm and welcome. But they are quickly left behind, lost as man in infinite space and nothingness, in a world blank as "snow" and, ironically, mysteriously "dark."

But if images of space are commonplace, abstractions are essential. What, for example, of "space" itself? The word evokes no specific image, yet its very imprecision, its lack of imagined limits, gives it a mental spaciousness fitting the needs of the prairie poem. So the descent from mountain to prairie in J. M. C. Alexander's "Plainsong" is described as a drop "down to history/where space is past for miles." The difficulty of comprehension in Zieroth's "Across Canada" and Stevens's "Prairie: Time and Place" is acknowledged by the incorporation of the intangible, invisible and abstract. Patrick Lane finds "nothing to hold onto" and the usually desperate Margaret Atwood wanders through "flat/edmonton" where

> the houses,
> trees, parked cars are
> a tight surface covering
> panic or only more
> nothing than I've ever seen.

The recurring sense is of a vacancy which almost has a physical being. Kenneth McRobbie captures the sense so effectively in "The Prairie Smokes":

> There are enough of us not to care for such a
> mere sign of sustained seeming life,
> mere presence upon this circumference of absence.[19]

The distant fire, even man himself, is insignificant in a world whose limits dissolve at a glance into nothingness. (The contrast between a circumference which slips into absence and the precision and harmony of the Medicine Wheel Circle speaks bluntly of a cultural gap in the perception of prairie nature.) Douglas Barbour's "Poem: The Distances" develops a similar feeling through an entire poem. He starts with quite precise images — "an uncoiled spring/a singing wire" — to express winter's cold space and the cycles of life. But then the poem slips into the more congenial abstractions:

> Say only this, say only the hope
> the urge expressed
> in the movement outwards the
> sweeping gesture of construction;
> and isn't this enough and
> can't we say, and saying
> comprehend
> its magnanimity:
>
> to whisper
> across this frozen country
> certain possible words.[20]

One can't help but be reminded of the "bleak expectancy" in Patrick Anderson's "Poem on Canada." The poet reaches for articulateness, feels a hope, an urge, that will capture his sense of the vast and yet the generous spirit of the place. The abstraction "magnanimity" is a fortunate choice, but even it doesn't quite satisfy and the poem ends in ironic whispers of words which have not yet been found.

There is something magnanimous, too, in the "nothing" which is at the beginning and end of Peter Stevens's "Prairie":

There is nothing

nothing to stand in
the way of the eye.

Earth rolls under light
scabbed by brush.

Over water course
over slough and sand-flat
eye travels out
to rest on land's ledge.

Sky sheets down
sun-glazed air

eye open
in/to space where

there is nothing.[21]

Stevens begins with prairie space to express a concern about man's relationship to cosmic space. The repeated "nothing" at the beginning of the poem is at once a reminder of human solitude, of the ultimate responsibility of the individual perception, and a challenging possibility to insight: in a sense everything is visible. What is first seen is the landscape spreading away from the observer. The poet, using another more personal image of travelling into the distances, pictures the features of the prairie world where even the brush seems a wound in the flat perfection of the landscape. The prairie is the microcosm which seems to come to a definite end where the "sky sheets down" abruptly and the air is "glazed." But the eye can peer over the ledge, into nothingness which is also the infinite space of the universe. By the simple device of splitting the preposition "in/to" Stevens suggests the range of possibilities. The "eye" and the "I" (the pun becomes inescapable) open "in" or amidst space. They also open "to" space, and therefore to awareness and acceptance of it. And as they open "into" space the poet seems to see through space, and also into himself. The space, the nothingness is not only out there but within the self. The nothingness of prairie space enables us to confront the reality of our own existence, to understand the nothing that is our personal reality.

Spacious images and abstractions might be effectively reinforced by exploiting the space of the page. But experiments in the visual arrangement of the poem have had little impact on prairie poetry. Birney's "on the night jet" is printed in white on a dark ground to recreate the view of a few lights on a black landscape; the technique is clever, but not especially spacious. The most striking concrete poem of the prairie is Terrence Heath's cover poem for *an anthology of poetry by Saskatoon poets*. Printed in black, lower-case letters on a bright white cover, Heath's poem consists of the word "prairie" repeated endlessly in one straight line. The remarkable

effect is to recreate the thin, far-reaching line of horizon which is the landscape's most distinctive feature, the only thing which keeps earth from fading into sky in an endless blankness. Curiously, too, the poem makes you look again at the word "prairie," makes you notice, for example, to use a phrase Stephen Scobie employs in a different context, that prairie is "a word surrounding 'air'."[22] P. K. Page explores the possibilities of the same word in three recent concrete poems published in *White Pelican* but none is as effective as the tense simplicity of Heath's poem.

It seems curious, too, thinking of visual effects in poetry, that few poets have ventured to Whitman's line, spacious as it is both visually and aurally:

> I am afoot with my vision.
> . . . . . .
> Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless
> and lonesome prairie
> Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread
> of the square miles far and near.[23]

But rather than join Carl Sandburg inhaling Whitman's "great draughts of space" most poets of the Canadian plains are content with a much less sweeping form. Even the narrative poem, which Frye has suggested fits the poetry of a vast land, has little prominence. Only part of "Towards the Last Spike" or of Dorothy Livesay's "Roots" tells the prairie story. Don Gutteridge comes closest to writing the poem we would expect in *Riel: A Poem for Voices*. But the most intriguing longer poem is John Newlove's extended lyric "Ride Off Any Horizon."

Newlove's poem is in six sections each beginning with the challenge to reader and poet to

> Ride off any horizon
> and let the measure fall
> where it may — [24]

There is a spirit of adventure and casualness in these lines which is perhaps betrayed by the rest of the poem. To go beyond the material and visible world is to venture into a world of dreams, memories, and possibilities. Newlove's vague "measure" is some instrument or means of determining dimensions and quantity, of establishing comparisons and making judgements. It is also the measure of poetry, its tune or rhythm. Riding off the horizon, then, as in several of the poems I have discussed, means groping for a way to comprehend and define. The way in the first section of the poem is through images of a child's prairie world: the "fields of wild mustard," the swimming hole, "the throbbing powerhouse," the cattle tracks "filling with liquid." But the tone is not nostalgic; rather the "narrow prairie" and the "river running steadily away" suggest that these images are not adequate.

In each succeeding section of the poem the "measure" seems more mature as the child grows and becomes man. In the second section the past is remote and difficult to grasp, a record of destruction, of animals,

men and things destroyed or discarded. The "depression," the poet predicts, will come again in the land. To a generation who never experienced Depression a wallet-sized photo must serve as the only reminder of the draining of a "desire" for love and for life, of a pervasive emptiness and a depression "in the spirit." In the third section the "measure" touches nothing and oblivion. The stubborn empiricism of the school boy convinces him that he could fall off this "black prairie" into a greater blackness. To the eye the earth is not "never-ending" and "round" but "finished, definite, precise —." Precise, apparently, and yet like McRobbie's "circumference of absence," holding the possibility of endless space even in its precision.

For the adolescent the measure is taken from the relationship of man to man. The fumbling love of the boys and girls, the lust of the man, the rivalry of the women, turn out to be as empty of desire as are the "beaten farmer and his wife." From the social interaction, however empty, the Indian is excluded. The "measure" in the fifth section of the poem is that of the passionate young man discovering the dimensions of bigotry, battle and exploitation in his society and his past. The poet finds what the Indian displaced from his lands has come to know: that even the land and home are not certain:

> though you love that land more,
> you will go where they take you.

The final section of the poem has a truncated opening:

> Ride off any horizon
> and let the measure fall —

Newlove shifts the poem to a more definite desire for "measure." He also suggests that the poetic measure must "fall," indicating that the final note is sombre, just short of despair. The poet finds the depression of the spirit predicted in section two. The prairie emptiness is also urban. The cities desire "commerce/to fill up the emptiness." Eyes now try to avoid other eyes. "Vision," in its sense of imaginative perception, is the potential in riding off into space. The "concrete horizon" of the modern city limits space and "stop[s] vision visibly." So in this poem the prairie experiences of isolation and uniformity become the common problem of contemporary urban man.

Newlove's poem stresses the dark side of the response to prairie space and nature. But there is a more positive side with which I might more appropriately end. After all no less a poet than Sarah Binks has urged us to

> Despond not, though times be bale,
> And baleful be,
> Though winds blow stout a hurricale,
> What's that, what's that to you and me.

So when George Bowering takes his poetic "measure" of the prairie in *rocky mountain foot* he assumes an attitude which delights in exploration of the prairie and yet cautions us not to take prairie regionalism too seriously.

His "A Sudden Measure" seems to me one of the most effective expressions of space within the tight confines of the lyric.

This sudden snow:
  immediately
the prairie is!

Those houses are:
  dark
under roofs of snow —

That hill up to the cloud is:
  markt
by snow creeks down to town —

This footpath is:
  a bare line
across white field —

  This woman appears
  thru drift of snow:

a red coat.[25]

The prairie is defined here by abrupt climatic change and, ironically, by whiteness. The houses seem to take their existence from their "dark" contrast to the surrounding snow. Further in the distance the "hill" has its presence "markt/by snow creeks" which link the receding landscape with the town. Indeed this image is still more spacious for the hill runs "up to the cloud" and distinctions between land and sky again seem to be obliterated. The "footpath," evidence of man's presence and journey, would be hardly visible if it were not for the surprise appearance of a human figure. The woman, unlike prairie, houses, hill or footpath, *appears*. The "red coat" without a body in it expresses a sense of apparition, even of magic, in the poem. But it is also the one bit of colour, the guarantee of presiding humanity, amidst so much white space.

"Space," says Eli Mandel, "finally comes to be occupied not by legend but by objects. And at this point, the terror of emptiness recedes."[26] Silence, we might add, comes to be occupied by song. The images and abstractions which create the beginnings of a plains poetry are enabling us collectively to live with the space. These poems, like the "objects" in Atwood's "Migration: C.P.R.," will be our guides:

and the prairies were so nearly
empty as prehistory
that each of the
few solid objects took some great
implication, hidden but
more sudden than a signpost

FOOTNOTES

[1]Rudy Wiebe, "Passage By Land," *Writers of the Prairies*, ed. Donald G. Stephens (Vancouver, 1973), pp. 130-31.
[2]Donald Stephens, "Introduction," *Writers of the Prairies*, p. 5.

[3]George Woodcock, Review of Dale Zieroth, *Clearing*, *Quill and Quire*, 40: 1 (January 1974), 13.
[4]J. Howard Richards, "The Prairie Region," in *Canada: A Geographical Interpretation*, ed. John Warkentin (Toronto, 1968), pp. 397-98.
[5]Milton Wilson, "Recent Canadian Verse," in *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, ed. E. Mandel (Chicago, 1971), p. 198.
[6]Hyemeyohsts Storm, *Seven Arrows* (New York, 1973), p. 14.
[7]Henry Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers* (Ottawa, 1929), p. 13.
[8]Zola Isabell Campbell, *A Tale of the Early Years* (Edmonton, n.d.).
[9]Hugh Duddridge, *Seen From My Seeder Step: A Volunteer Crop of Verse From a Saskatchewan Farm* (Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, 1950), p. 20.
[10]Robert Stead, "The Prairie," *The Empire Builders and Other Poems* (Toronto, 1910), p. 33.
[11]Rudyard Kipling, "The Canadian Prairies," in *Saskatchewan: Her Infinite Variety* (Regina, 1924), p. 1.
[12]Cited in W. O. Raymond, *The Infinite Moment* (Toronto, 1965), p. 10.
[13]Eli Mandel, "Departure," *Black and Secret Man* (Toronto, 1964), p. 24.
[14]Earle Birney, "on the night jet," *Rag and Bone Shop* (Toronto, 1971).
[15]Peter Stevens, "Prairie: Time and Place," *Nothing But Spoons* (Montreal, 1969).
[16]George Bowering, "prairie," *rocky mountain foot* (Toronto, 1968), p. 24.
[17]Milton Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
[18]Bowering, *rocky mountain foot*, p. 100.
[19]Kenneth McRobbie, "The Prairie Smokes, I: Generation," in *New Poems of the Seventies*, ed. Douglas Lochhead and Raymond Souster (Oberon, 1970), p. 146.
[20]Douglas Barbour, "Poem: The Distances:," *Land Fall* (Montreal, 1971).
[21]Peter Stevens, "Prairie," *A Few Myths* (Vancouver, 1971).
[22]Stephen Scobie, "Streak Mosaic," in *Stories from Western Canada*, ed. Rudy Wiebe (Toronto, 1972), p. 158.
[23]Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. James E. Miller, Jr. (Boston, 1959), pp. 48-49.
[24]John Newlove, "Ride Off Any Horizon," *Rhymes and Reasons*, ed. John Robert Colombo (Toronto, 1971), pp. 90-95.
[25]Bowering, *rocky mountain foot*, p. 50.
[26]Eli Mandel, "Modern Canadian Poetry," Twentieth Century Literature, 16 (1970), 181.

5 MAN AND NATURE IN THE MODERN WEST: A REVOLUTION OF IMAGES

DOUGLAS JOHN HALL

INTRODUCTION: THE GREAT REVOLT

It is hardly news today if someone announces that we live in a period of change, a time of radical transition. Nobody even becomes very excited any more if instead of speaking of change or transition one speaks about revolution. It may be that the reason for this lack of response to the once dangerous word revolution is that so many of the "revolutions" of our time have turned out to be boring little affairs which have ended by giving us more of the same, somewhat differently arranged: a matter of reshuffling the deck-chairs on the Titanic, as a colleague of mine likes to say. Even the big revolutions of our epoch have often tended to reproduce variations of the same values and attitudes as those of the societies they were revolting against.

I can illustrate what I mean by relaying to you a joke I heard this summer from an Hungarian citizen on one of the main streets in Budapest. "Have you heard about the visit of Brezniev to Willie Brandt?" he asked us — and since we'd been living in Germany all year we answered that we could hardly *not* have heard about the visit of the Russian head of state with the Chancellor of that affluent country.

"Well, you know then, I suppose," continued the Hungarian, "that Willie gave Brezniev a big new Mercedes?"

"Oh yes," we answered knowingly; "at first he offered Brezniev a *silver* Mercedes, but Brezniev said that would be too distinctive."

"Yes, yes," said the Hungarian, "but you obviously didn't hear the whole story. Here it is: When Brezniev was offered the *black* Mercedes, he still protested: 'As a comrade in the revolutionary state,' he said, 'I can't simply take this capitalist product from you, as an outright gift. Let me at least give you something for it.' 'Well, if you insist,' said Willie, embarrassed, 'Give me . . . oh, give me ten Marks.' " (That was about six dollars Canadian.)

"So Brezniev got out his wallet," our Hungarian acquaintance went on, lowering his voice a little, for a certain lady was lingering conspicuously in our vicinity —" and after fumbling around for a time he handed Willie a *twenty*-Mark note, muttering that he couldn't find a ten. Willie in turn reached for his wallet, and then exclaimed, '*Ach, es tut mir leid*, — I am so sorry, but I don't have any change.' 'Oh well,' said Comrade Brezniev straightaway, 'just give me another Mercedes.' "

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It's only a story, and not to be repeated as if it were fact. Still, the same *basic point* could be made in very prosaic and well-documented ways: so many of the revolutions of our era have become variations on a theme, an old theme — the theme of man's obsession with the accumulation of more and bigger and faster means, for the accomplishment of . . . of what? That's the question. The revolutions have often been inspired by noble ends. But the ends have just as often ceased, soon enough, to have any real control over the means. And means, in the absence of operative ends, have a way of becoming ends in themselves.

What I want to suggest, however, is that there is a revolution going on in our time that is a real one. It isn't to be identified with most of the phenomena that call themselves revolutions — the "little orthodoxies," as George Orwell called them, "which vie with each other for possession of our souls." The great revolution is one that is occurring, and has been for a rather long time, at a level deeper and more ultimately radical than the rather noisy affairs that are usually called revolutions. The political, social, educational, racial, sexual and other revolutions that we have heard a great deal about are no doubt stirrings, on the surface of history, of the great revolution that is occurring under the surface. Most of us are caught up in that deeper revolution, one way or another, usually without understanding that we are, or how we are. A phenomenon like the so-called Counter Culture, which I think has not subsided (as some suggest) but has infiltrated our society and already changed many things, is a manifestation of this revolution. I wouldn't suggest (with Charles Reich, Philip Slater and others) that it *is* the revolution — it is only a manifestation, perhaps an important one, of something which transcends it. In fact, none of the specific things to which in this connection allusions could be made — the political and other revolutions, the changing atmosphere in universities, the counterculture, and so forth — should be equated with the great revolution; none of them, nor all of them together.

What is this great revolution, then? We have to be careful about naming it. It may be possible to discern what it is a revolution *against* — I think it is. It is a Great Revolt — and a revolt is always against something. We are on thinner ice when we try to say what it is a revolution *for*. Most of the little revolutions to which I have referred end up by becoming 'little *orthodoxies*' because they want to give a definite shape to the revolutionary energy too soon. They want to contain it in theories and doctrines and laws. But, fortunately for us all, it has a way of breaking out of these boxes, and by-passing the people who think they have harnessed it to their own little carts. There is *no* satisfactory way of naming this revolutionary force. It is at bottom the force of *life*, life in both a biological and a spiritual sense; life, seeking to avoid what it sees on the horizon as inevitable destruction and death for a society that does *not* revolutionize itself. For purposes of convenience — but without attaching anything like finality to the term — I call this revolution the revolution of images. Underneath the little revolutions, the chaos and pluralism and confusion of our times, life is attempting

to discover for man a new image of himself. That, in a manner of speaking, is the thesis of this paper. Now I want to elaborate it.

1. WHAT IS MEANT BY "IMAGE OF MAN"?

In the first place, I had better explain what I mean by the term "image of man" (*imago hominis*). It may be easier to grasp the meaning of this term first at the personal level. Each of us possesses (and is possessed by!) an image of himself. We have, that is, a certain mental picture of ourselves, which we bring into all our encounters with other beings. In the presence of others, we are conscious, not only of the others, but of ourselves interacting with those others. Sometimes we are so "self-conscious" — i.e., so conscious of our "self" as we have pictured it to ourself—that we are inhibited from entering freely into the exchange.

A few further observations about personal images may help to establish the use of the term in what follows. For one thing, our images of ourselves are usually only half formed; often they are held at the level of the subconscious, with vague aspects showing through at the conscious level. Usually they contain contradictory elements. Few of us are able honestly and accurately to articulate what image of ourselves we carry about with us. Our self-images are also always in a state of flux, with new data helping or hindering, denying or confirming elements that we want to foster.

However, there is probably with most of us a certain continuity in our self-image from year to year, stage to stage. I suspect that certain aspects of the image persist throughout our lives. Especially aspects which are the results of strong impressions made in our earliest years. The persistence of these aspects, as well as other facets of the whole business of image-making, frequently renders our self-image the source of greatest pain and conflict. And of all of us it must be said, I think, not only that we possess an image of ourself but that we are possessed *by* an image of our self.

The data that goes into the process out of which images are made is often very binding; frequently it is permanently destructive. Sixty-year-old men go about the world with inflated images of themselves because they were never able to forget Mama telling the next-door-neighbour that Johnny had a superior intellect. Other sixty-year-old men overheard other, less complimentary things. We tend to become what we imagine ourselves to be, and what we imagine ourselves to be is usually influenced very widely by the fantasies and ideals of our parents and others. In this way, personal images often persist and continue to exercise their authority over us, long after the circumstances which gave rise to them have been altered. Long after "Johnny" has ceased to be the relatively industrious little school kid and has become J.D., the office autocrat!

Now the term "image of man" can be applied to men collectively as well as individually. In fact, it can be said that what chiefly distinguishes one human society from another, one culture or civilization from another, one period of history from another, are the differing ways in which they

regard what it means to be a human being. Societies tend to generate and be generated by a particular image of man.

There are undoubtedly always a variety of images of man in any culture; but a particular type tends to dominate, with variations on the theme. Indeed, if each of *us* has an image of himself individually, we can be pretty certain that a high proportion of the content or character of that image comes directly and indirectly from the kind of image of man that is dominant *in our society*. We regularly conform to the public image — as fashion designers understand very well — because non-conformity is a painful business. There are always exceptions to the rules, but on the whole it is possible to learn a good deal about a society by examining one of its citizens carefully.

So for example if you want to know what sort of "image of man" informed the society of Victorian England, you only have to spend an afternoon in a cathedral graveyard, reading the epitaphs on tombstones of the period. Many of the people who put those epitaphs up probably thought they were being terribly original. With hindsight we can observe that most of them in fact conform to a well-known way of thinking about life.

Today we don't record our dominant image of man on tombstones; we put it into advertisements for Disneyland, Grade B movies, and school curricula. We have found that these are better ways of preserving the dominant social image — and for us, as perhaps for no other time in history, there has come to be a very strong need to *preserve* the dominant social image of man. Besides, there are those who have immense vested interests in maintaining this particular image of man intact.

2. WHY DO IMAGES OF MAN CHANGE?

From time to time, images of man change rather markedly. As in the case of personal images, there is always some sort of movement, variation, reshuffling, where cultural images of man are concerned. Sometimes, however, this gradual movement, which may be compared with evolution, I suppose, becomes revolutionary: there is a radical break with the past, a noticeable rejection of the values and beliefs that have shaped the preceding period, and, rather gradually, the formation of new values and beliefs.

Historians of human culture differ in their dating of these watershed periods, although there is much more agreement amongst historians about the classification of these periods than is commonly thought. Certainly there is general agreement that the epoch we call the Modern period (Modernity) began ostensibly with the Renaissance. But obviously something so consequential as a whole new way of thinking about man and the world does not normally occur suddenly and with equal clarity everywhere. So disagreement amongst students of history often revolves around the precise location of decisive events, persons, writings, and so forth.

I am tempted to agree with Barbara W. Tuchman, who locates the beginnings of the revolution of images which gave rise to Modernity in the

14th Century, a period of crises and of suffering comparable, she thinks, to our own. It was an apocalyptic era. People thought they were living at the end of the world. And why wouldn't they? One third of Europe was carried off by the black plague. All the systems of order were breaking down. "Yet," says Dr. Tuchman, "amidst the disintegration were sprouting, invisible to contemporaries, the green shoots of the Renaissance to come. In human affairs as in nature, decay is compost for new growth."[1]

This gives us a certain clue about the dynamics of change in images of man. Why and how do new images of man come about? The question can be tackled at many levels, of course; but it seems to me that at a rudimentary level it would be necessary to say something like this: new images of man struggle to come into being at the point where the old ones no longer function for the support and expression *of life*. If a certain so-called "Way of Life" begins to look like a "Way of Death," man has thus far seemed reasonably adept at sensing that, and looking about for another "Way of Life."

As for *how* new images of man emerge — the mechanics, so to speak — it would seem in the past that they have cropped up at first in the minds of a few men, men who very often didn't realize that they were expressing the very stuff out of which a whole new way of being men would emerge. (Newton is a good example.) And then, gradually, because the new image of man was somehow "right" for the times — that is, because it looked like a way into the future, beyond the threat of disintegration — it would become the new dominant way of thinking about existence, replacing the old way sometimes in the space of a few generations.

But the replacing of an old image of man is never a tranquil thing, in individuals or in societies. For old images hang on. They are deeply entrenched. In societies, this entrenchment is not just a matter of the establishment of conventions and patterns; it is enshrined in institutions. Institutions are the crystallization of the fantasies of generations which preceded us. There are vested interests in maintaining these institutions, and so in maintaining *the images* which gave rise to them. Thus images outlast the circumstances that brought them into being; they outlast their usefulness, even to the point of threatening the very thing they were elaborated to protect and foster, the life of the species.

3. THE IMAGE OF MAN AS TECHNOCRAT

And precisely that is a special feature of the image of man by which our own epoch, the Modern one, has been impelled: it is leading us towards the edge of the precipice, but it is still able to commend itself, apparently, to a great many people. It is deeply entrenched. It could be in fact that no other image of man has ever been so thoroughly established as this one.

Certainly it is more universal than any other in history. But beyond this universality, it is so ingrained in our attitudes and values, so incarnate in our institutions, that it does not occur to the majority of people even

today that they are living according to a particular image of man, something historically conditioned, limited in its applicability, and full of liabilities even at the best of times. So normative, so utterly taken for granted does this way of being seem to vast numbers of people that they don't even reflect upon it. It simply is. Or, even worse, many who reflect a little upon it (but only a little!) think that this way of being and doing, this 'Modern' way, this 'American Way of Life,' and so forth, is the very pinnacle of human achievement, towards which all history has been striving with might and main. Only a high degree of exposure to the lethal tendencies of this way of life, or a real exposure to other periods of human history, or to other cultures, which have had another way of life, can teach most of us that what we in this society have regarded as normal or even noble is in reality just a way, one amongst many, of thinking about man.

Fortunately, a significant minority of people have experienced the shock of this recognition in our time. It is in them that the revolution of images is at work. It is not accidental that many of them are young. But before I pursue that further, I want to spend a little time trying to describe this old, dominant image of man which impels the dominant culture of our society.

I call it the image of *man as technocrat*. By this I do not mean simply man as a being who possesses very complicated technological methods and implements — i.e., post-industrial man. I do not mean machinery. Machinery, modern machinery, is one of the results of this image of man, not its cause. Machinery, as Jacques Ellul says, is "symptomatic" of the image: "It represents the ideal toward which technique strives."[2]

To speak of man in the image of the technocrat means to speak, first of all, about a way man has of regarding *himself*. More specifically, it means his way of understanding *the relationship between himself and his environment*. It means, concretely, man's vision of himself as *master* of his environment; that is, master of nature. He is 'in charge.' He orders the fate of what surrounds him. He controls the destiny of the inarticulate creatures; he utilizes for his own purposes the resources of the earth—no questions asked. He is master in this house. He is the lord of nature — of all nature. And by the way — just to anticipate a little — the greatest built-in flaw in this image of man, as George Grant, the Canadian political philosopher, has shown,[3] is that finally the mastery of all nature has to mean also the mastery of human nature. The mechanization of nature has finally to mean the mechanization of man. And at that point it becomes difficult to understand just what "mastery" might mean—the point at which man the master becomes the object of his own mastery!

4. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMAGE

In order to understand this image of man (and there is no more relevant *political* act today than to try to understand just this) we have to ask about its origins. When did man begin to think of himself as one whose destiny was to bend everything to his own will?

A common answer, and one that is popular, I have found, amongst people who want to protect modern technological trends from criticism, is that man has always been something of a technocrat, always tried to lord it over his environment. And that is of course rather obvious, at a certain level of discussion. But to have the desire for mastery, and actually to believe oneself master are two different states of mind. What has been born of the *desire* for mastery has been, not so much mechanical technology, but religion! Religion is technique of a kind: the technique of getting in touch with the forces one believes are in control, and finding out how to control them—or at least to influence them . . . or it . . . or him . . . or her! (Mother Nature!)

In this connection the historian Lynn White, Jr., has made the claim that we have to trace the idea of man as master of nature directly to the Bible of the Jews and Christians.[4] The source of our ecological crisis, he insists, is to be found in the Biblical account of man, and especially in the story of creation, in which man is told by the Creator to "fill the earth and subdue it" and "have dominion over" all the other creatures (Genesis 1).

This is also, however, a rather unhelpful way of locating the beginnings of the technocratic image of man. It is not only bad Biblical interpretation, it is bad history as well. However modern Western civilization may have *used* the Genesis myths (and people have used the Bible for a lot of very questionable purposes), the two creation stories themselves (there are two of them, by the way) by no means intend to claim anything like the modern concept of man's destiny to master his environment.

There are numerous things that Professor White's interpretation leaves out of account in its Biblical interpretation, and it is not possible to go into all of them just now. But one thing in particular must be mentioned: while the Biblical stories of man's creation and fall (White doesn't even speak about the fall of man, significantly) do distinguish man *from* the rest of nature, they by no means grant him unconditional mastery *over* nature. His distinction from nature, moreover, does not lie in the idea that he is somehow another sort of being, belonging to an order of existence different from the other animals. It lies, rather, in the responsibility he is given for them. As for his own being, he is of the earth, earthy. There could hardly have been a more earthy account of man than one has in the two Biblical creation sagas, especially the older of the two. He is called "Adam." Why? The name isn't just arbitrary, a nice name thought up by the parent, so to speak. It has a meaning. It means the one who is taken from the earth. The Hebrew words for man and earth, or ground, are the same: *Adam* from *Adamah*.

And what is this creature to *do*? The primary emphasis is upon man's responsibility. He is to be the keeper of the Garden. In fact if one were looking for a way of designating the image of man in Genesis — and in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures at large — one could not find a better word than the word 'Keeper.' The more frequent New Testament term is 'steward,' which means just the same thing. He is steward — therefore not

the owner. Mastery — the mastery of ownership — belongs to Another, to the Creator Himself. And man, the steward, is accountable to that Other. Moreover, the Creator has certain designs for his creation about which man does not know and which are independent of man's wishes and even, it may be, of his welfare. Man must observe certain 'laws' which preserve these designs. When he does not, then the earth itself — the ground — cries out against him. The ground will not yield its increase.

The garden becomes a wilderness when man steps out of the bounds of his *stewardship* of nature and seeks to *possess* it: that is part of the meaning of the story of man's fall.

Lynn White, Jr., is right, I think, when he finds the roots of the ecological crisis in man's vision of himself as master of nature. But he is wrong in locating historically the effective beginnings of that idea. In fact, it's a rather sneaky way out of the problem we face today, and misleading when it comes to thinking about solutions, to put the blame for the ecological problem on some remote epoch in history. The roots of our ecological crisis are to be located *much closer to home that that*. The image of man as master of nature did not become a believable, operative way of thinking about man — in other words did not become an image of man — until the beginnings of the Modern epoch.

The preparation for this way of thinking about man and his world certainly can be discerned in the Renaissance of the 14th to the 16th Centuries. But it was in the 17th Century particularly that the new understanding of man's place in the universe became visible. By then, the mystery and awesomeness of the natural universe, which still impressed the Medieval mind, had given way to a new spirit of bold inquiry in the minds of a few very influential men. We can hear this spirit in the words of the philosopher Thomas Hobbes for example:

> Fear and reverence Nature no longer; she is no mystery, for she "worketh by motion," and Geometry . . . ; Geometry can chart these motions. Feel, then, as if you lived in a world which can be measured, weighed, and mastered; and confront it *with due audacity*.[5]

In a similar statement, the philosopher Descartes depicts the entry of man into his true lordship over nature:

> I perceived it possible to arrive at a knowledge highly useful in life; and in place of the speculative philosophy usually taught in the schools, to discover a practical philosophy, by means of which, knowing the force and action of fire, water, the stars, the heavens and all other bodies that surround us, as distinctly as we know the various crafts and arts of our artisans, we might also apply them in the same way to all the uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves *the lords and possessors of nature*.[6]

Before we express astonishment over such statements, or even indignation, we should pause to think a little. The image of man as lord and master of nature did not come into being on the basis of sheer delusions of grandeur on man's part. There were good and necessary reasons for its appearance. If the image of man which had shaped the medieval period had

continued; if the institutions in which that image had crystallized itself had not been overthrown; if there had been no alternative image developed somewhere in the darkness and chaos of the 13th and 14th centuries, then the spiritual and perhaps also physical deterioration of the species might well have occurred long before now. The image of man as *master of his environment* took over at a point—as I have already said in referring to Barbara Tuchman's article—where men had very good reasons for thinking that the world would end. So enslaved was medieval man to political and ecclesiastical structures, to superstition, to a fatalized worldview in which he was simply the pawn of supernatural and natural forces, that it was absolutely necessary for his survival that he acquire a new way of regarding himself in relation to his environment. The image of man as master of nature emerged out of the ruins of an old image which had become destructive.

Accordingly, what I want to say in what follows is not that the image of man as master of his environment *was* wrong, but that it *is* wrong. It is wrong for us today. It, in turn, has become a destructive image of man. There were certain flaws in it from the beginning, as there probably are in all the images men and societies acquire for themselves. They contain within "themself," as one might say, the seeds of their own destruction. All the same, we should not be so superior as to think that the image of man as master of nature was simply wrong-headed from the outset. The statements of Hobbes and Descartes which I cited a moment ago are apt to sound to us—or to some of us—the height of human arrogance. Certainly there is an amount of unwarranted pride in them—*hubris*, as the Greeks would have called it; but we should also hear behind the scenes of these statements, and similar ones that we can read, a kind of rejoicing on the part of men who had at last discovered that they didn't just have to sit down and wait for the plague or war or famine to end their misery!

By the 18th Century, the mood of rejoicing had, however, definitely begun to give way to something rather arrogant. At least, men now began to take it for granted that the human race was destined for an unlimited and increasingly glorious reign as "lords and possessors of nature." It was no longer seen as merely a happy circumstance that man had been granted a certain respite from his domination by natural and supernatural powers, but it was considered (let us say—to use the 18th Century word) a Right. Indeed it was a matter of *fact*, a certainty, no longer merely a hope.

This certainty was expressed in the so-called doctrine of historical progress. Giving expression to the doctrine of progress, Condorcet could write at the end of the 18th Century:

> Nature has set no term [no limits!] to the perfection of human faculties . . . ; the perfectibility of man is truly infinite; and the progress of this perfectibility, from now on independent of any power that might wish to halt it, has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has cast us.[7]

And the globe itself, let us add, was regarded as virtually limitless in productivity and duration, and infinitely resilient.

The 19th Century marked the emergence of the tools, ever more complex and more plentiful, which were required for the full implementation of the concept of mastery, and the development of the society that was by now thoroughly established on the basis of this concept. Through the wonders of machinery, man was able to demonstrate to himself the rightness of the image of himself as "lord and possessor of nature." It was natural that the technocratic image of man would express itself in the process of industrialization. At the same time a class, the middle class, came into being to manage the process. Everybody was terribly enthusiastic.

A few sensitive and reflective men were reluctant to join this happy throng. In them one can hear the beginnings of the revolution of images about which I spoke at the beginning of this lecture — the revolution which is occurring in our own epoch: Blake, Ruskin, Wordsworth, Dickens and many others. Still others, of a different but all the same negative frame of mind, were noticing what all this was doing to the poor. Marx was among them. A few angry men at the beginning of the century began to see themselves being replaced by machinery; and being unable to express their fear in other, more articulate ways, they tried to murder the machines. The Luddites. Every educated person should read the transcript of their trial sometime.[8] "The last human beings," somebody called them.

So there was already at the industrial height of the era shaped by this image of man a protest movement; and most of the contemporary movements of protest find their roots, rightly, in that beginning. But at the time it was not very influential, especially not in North America, that favoured child of the new *imago hominis*. In an affluent, expectant society not much attention is paid to the testimony of the learned and the damned.

The prevailing mood at the end of the 19th Century was very optimistic. It is expressed rather precisely in this quotation from a letter written by Mark Twain to Walt Whitman on Whitman's 70th Birthday. The year was 1889.

> You have lived just the seventy years which are greatest in the world's history and richest in benefit and advancement to its peoples. These seventy years have done much more to widen the interval between man and the other animals than was accomplished by any five centuries which preceded them. What great births you have witnessed! The steam press, the steamship, the steel ship, the railroad, the perfect cotton gin, the telegraph, the phonograph, photogravure, the electrotype, the gaslight, the electric light, the sewing machine, and the amazing, infinitely varied and innumerable products of coal tar, those latest and strongest marvels of a marvelous age. And you have seen even greater births than these; for you have seen the application of anesthesia to surgery-practice, whereby the ancient dominion of pain, which began with the first created life, came to an end on this earth forever. . . . Yes, you have indeed seen much—but tarry for awhile, for the greatest is yet to come. Wait thirty years, and *then* look out over the earth. You shall see marvels upon marvels added to those whose

> nativity you have witnessed; and conspicuous about them you shall see the formidable Result — man at almost his full stature at last! — and still growing, visibly growing while you look. . . . Wait till you see that great figure appear, and catch the far glint of the sun upon his banner; then you may depart satisfied, as knowing you have seen him for whom the earth was made, and that he will proclaim that human wheat is more than human tares, and proceed to organize human values on that basis.[9]

Wait! cries Mark Twain — just wait for thirty years! Thirty years from 1889 would have brought Whitman, at age one hundred, to the year 1919. By that time, the bubble had burst — especially for sensitive Europeans, who looked out and didn't see the sun streaming gloriously on the banner of the new humanity, but a battlefield scattered with the bodies of the young and the so-called honour of the nations.

But, as I have tried to establish from the outset of this lecture, an image of man has a habit of lingering long after it has ceased to be supported by evidence. And, after all, the idea of mastery is a pretty heady concept, an attractive image! Very few people can entertain the thought that there might be something inherently wrong with it, unless they have been confronted by some rather forceful, perhaps even terrifying, evidence of the havoc it can wreak in the world.

On the whole, most North Americans have only just begun to be open to that kind of evidence, though the majority are plainly terrified by it and repress it in an almost phenomenal way. The image of man as master of nature is deeply embedded in our whole history as a people. In fact, we are the special product of this image. We are the place in particular where it was all supposed to happen! The New World for the New Man! Until recently, and even still, we have been spared the grosser demonstrations provided by our epoch of the terrible things this image of man is capable of producing. We have been until now rather on the periphery of the collapse of this image.

But the deluge has not by-passed us, finally. At last the people for whom Mark Twain spoke have been led to witness the fallacies, some of them, implicit in this way of thinking about ourselves. Through Viet Nam we were given reason to think that we might not after all have the right to picture ourselves as the shapers of history, the shining protectors of the innocent. 'Watergate' has provided its own vulgar confirmation of that. Through the crisis of the biosphere significant numbers in our society are learning that there are problems which, as Garret Hardin says, admit of "no technical solution."[10] We strongly resist and repress these lessons. But we can no longer embrace with such confidence and optimism as we heard in the statement of the author of *Tom Sawyer* this vision of ourselves as masters of our environment.

5. NOT MASTER, BUT MASTERED

Since Mark Twain wrote, something has changed. What is it? The change could not be discussed without reference to the events to which I

have already alluded—the first and second world wars, Viet Nam, the crisis of the biosphere, and so forth. But it is not simply to be equated with these events. What has changed since Walt Whitman's 70th Birthday has been, rather, at the level of man's fundamental belief concerning his own destiny. The world in which the idea of human mastery of the environment originated and developed was a world shot through and through with a sense of purpose. The idea of mastery went hand in hand with the belief that history itself was moving inevitably towards the fuller and fuller unfolding of this purpose. It could make a great deal of sense in such a world to think of man—the one being who could become conscious of this overarching purpose — exercising his superior intelligence, his skill as inventor and planner and so forth, to speed, enhance and direct the unfolding of this cosmic purpose.

What we call "the 20th Century" (did you notice that we no longer say those words as if we were speaking of the most glorious thing ever?) has been in effect a steady and increasingly powerful onslaught against the sense of a pervading purpose which had moved the centuries prior to ours. The crisis of the biosphere is only one sort of catastrophe. There have been internal as well as external, spiritual as well as physical assaults: the failure of that wonderful human "Rationality" in which Enlightenment man had put his trust; the outburst of rampant irrationality in our wars; the inability of the world religions, especially Christianity in the West, to continue to be a forum for the meeting of human hope and the realities of historical existence; the refusal of the young to believe in 'Progress.' Many of the most sensitive men and women of our era—including the artists and writers in particular — have been caused by these internal and external events to conclude that the universe is not only indifferent to our designs, but absurd. The sense of The Absurd permeates contemporary art, literature, and philosophy.

So long as men could believe that there was something worth mastering, they could give themselves over with some enthusiasm to an *imago hominis* that encouraged them to regard themselves as masters. So long as they could envisage themselves in control of a world that was progressing towards a fulfilment of the kind that inspired Mark Twain's epistle to Whitman, the image of mastery gave men a sense of great dignity. But the sense of an overarching purpose has disappeared in our time, even if the rhetoric of official optimism is even more in evidence than formerly. And what happens to man, the master, when he finds there is nothing worth mastering? The answer which another 19th Century Resistor of Modernity already gave is still worth pondering: 'Man's need to will,' said Friedrich Nietzsche; 'his will to power, is very strong. When he finds that there is nothing left to will, he will will . . . nothing.'[11]

If that seems a complex thought (and it is), you may find it easier to grasp in the form of this little story, a kind of parable, told by the strange contemporary commentator on the human condition, Kurt Vonnegut, whose work has so often been mistaken for science fiction.

In his book *The Sirens of Titan,* Vonnegut has a certain robot from a certain planet called Tralfamadore tell this story:

> Once upon a time on Tralfamadore there were creatures who weren't anything like machines. They weren't dependable. They weren't efficient. They weren't predictable. They weren't durable. And these poor creatures were obsessed by the idea that everything that existed had to have a purpose, and that some purposes were higher than others.
>
> These creatures spent most of their time trying to find out what their purpose was. And every time they found out what seemed to be a purpose of themselves, the purpose seemed so low that the creatures were filled with disgust and shame.
>
> And, rather than serve such a low purpose, the creatures would make a machine to serve it. This left the creatures free to serve higher purposes. But whenever they *found* a higher purpose, the purpose still wasn't high enough.
>
> So the creatures made machines to serve the higher purposes, too.
>
> And the machines did everything so expertly that they were finally given the job of finding out what the highest purpose of the creatures could be.
>
> The machines reported in all honesty that the creatures couldn't really be said to have any purpose at all.
>
> The creatures thereupon began slaying each other, because they hated purposeless things above all else.
>
> And they discovered that they weren't even very good at slaying. So they turned that job over to the machines, too. And the machines finished up the job in less time than it takes to say, 'Tralfamadore.'[12]

'When man finds that there is nothing left to will, he will will nothing'; ". . . the machines did everything so . . . expertly." "Nothing," says Jacques Ellul, "equals the perfection of our war machines."[13]

In the absence of purpose, technique becomes an end in itself. Modern technology began as an extension of man's vision of himself as master in a universe eminently worth mastering; it has ended by mastering man. Technology is "leaderless," says Martin Buber. In the dominant, technocratic culture of today there are no longer any purposes, any ends, any operative visions of the good life to which it has to answer. At first, the machine could be regarded as a servant of mankind, putting humanity's high goals and visions nearer their realization. In a society that has lost the sense of goals and has no more compelling visions of what might be, the machine has become increasingly the master.

To wit: In France last year, I heard a leading American technocrat (he was in charge of air traffic in the U.S.A.) assure an audience of experts in a great variety of fields that air and car travel would never be replaced by trains or other ground means of public transport. When somebody objected to that on the basis of energy consumption and pollution, he answered, "I can't tell you how it should be; I can only tell you how it is . . . *and will be.*" Nobody objected further. The process is *sui generis,* self perpetuating. An image that began as a high vision of man in relation to his environment has

ended in the pathetic story of man unable to direct his own processes — by a technologism whose "progress," like that of a runaway locomotive, he cannot stop.

CONCLUSION: THE SEARCH FOR A SOUL

There is, however, in man a very strong will to live, and this will to live has so far proved stronger than the will to power, which will will nothing when there is nothing left to will. The will to live in mankind has not been simply sitting idly by while the will to power went about courting our extinction. For a long time now there have been individuals and movements which perceived, already before the big catastrophes began, where the Way of Life based on the idea of mastering nature was leading us as a race. There have in fact been critics of this image of man from its beginnings — some of them criticizing it from a very conservative, reactionary point of view; others who have been recognized in our time as the greatest radicals, like Nietzsche.

We tend to forget the long history of the protest against this dominant image of man, we who have come into the struggle rather late in the game. We are apt to get the impression that we are the first ones who noticed something amiss, and then this leads to a rather comfortable — yes, I think somehow comfortable, pessimism, in which we are prone to see ourselves as lonely seers in the midst of a sea of impossibilities. The fact is, the revolution of images has been going on for a rather long time; and it is much more powerful than can be imagined by any of us.

As I observed earlier, I think that this revolution of the depths is still more perceptible as a revolution *against* something than *for* something — it is conspicuously a negative force, a force rejecting the dictates of the old image of mastery and debunking the institutions in which that image was housed. But it is also possible to experience the presence of this revolutionary force in its search for a *positive* form.

It is present in the attempt, wherever that attempt is being made, to appreciate again the beauty, wonder and uniqueness of the natural world, our participation *in* it, and our responsibility *for* it. It is present in the attempt of men, individually and in groups, to rediscover what man's real needs are and to distinguish those needs from the needs imposed upon him by the consumer society. It is present in the growing recognition of people from many different social backgrounds that "development," so called, is not the most desirable goal in the world. (At the German *Kirchentag* last year one of the most prevalent slogans was, "*Hilfe! Wir sind entwickelt*!" (Help! We're Developed!). It is present in the equally growing recognition of many people that we shall have to impose *limits* to growth — upon ourselves, and upon the economic forces which want to ignore these limits. It is present in the critique of technology — though this turns out in too many cases to be a criticism of machinery, and not of the mentality that seeks to manipulate nature and man through machinery. It is present in the

attempts to distribute the products of earth more equitably, and to reduce the evil discrepancy between the over-fed and the hungry. It is present in the endeavours being made in many places on earth to overthrow systems and institutions based on the unquestioning application of the technocratic image of man; and in the attempts to discover or rediscover a technology which does not end by dwarfing man.[14] It is present in the quests of many, particularly the young, for genuinely *human* community. It is present in the countless attempts, some of them pathetic, some courageous, to discover again the world of the subjective, to be able to see life in technicolour, to be able to feel joy and also pain; present in this denial that man is merely a machine for thinking.

George Orwell, one of the great seers of our epoch, wrote the following entry in his journal in 1940:

> Reading Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge's brilliant and depressing book, *The Thirties*, I thought of a rather cruel trick I once played on a wasp. He was sucking jam on my plate, and I cut him in half. He paid no attention, merely went on with his meal, while a tiny stream of jam trickled out of his severed esophagus. Only when he tried to fly away did he grasp the dreadful thing that had happened to him. It is the same with modern man. The thing that has been cut away is his soul, and there was a period — twenty years, perhaps — during which he did not notice it.[15]

Taking the metaphor from Orwell, I would say that what characterizes our situation thirty years after Orwell wrote these lines is that more and more people have noticed that in the process of acquiring honey man's soul has been cut away, and without his soul man cannot fly. Behind all the attempts to 'humanize' the world to which I have just made reference, and many to which I have not alluded, there is something like a search for a soul going on. The new image of man that is struggling to take form is one, not of the measurer, who discovered the orderly laws of the universe, such as is depicted in so many Renaissance paintings, but of one who tries again to see the world in terms of something like mystery, including the internal world of the self.

And that is pretty revolutionary.

I do not mean that the search for spirit or soul is something religious, though it is sometimes that too, even openly. (There are aspects of the religious side of it in fact that I deplore.) But I mean the discovery or rediscovery on man's part of a *quality* of existence, which cannot be reduced to measurement, to quantity, which cannot be fed into computers. The pursuit of this *qualitative understanding* of life could become the new basis on which to put limits on the rampant and leaderless processes by which the world is victimized.

The question is of course whether there is time for the revolution of images to come through with something powerful, commanding, and integrated enough to become the matrix of a new style of life. Many people who would agree with me that something like a revolution of images is occurring are sceptical. They point out (rightly) that images of man don't take shape

overnight. I would only counter this with the observation this revolution has already had a pretty long history.

And besides, it is never quite legitimate, I think, to generalize about history. It is true that the last big revolution of images — the one that inaugurated the modern age — was a relatively long while occurring, or at least in mobilizing itself. But the world has never faced the same sort of crisis of survival as meets us right now. New images of man, I have tried to say, occur because the will to live is strong in man. If the race suspects that it *may* become extinct unless it gets over a certain way of thinking about itself, well then it may get over that way of thinking about itself pretty quickly!

Beyond that, it should be some comfort to educators to understand — what I think biology has somehow taught us — namely, that the suspicion that something bad is about to happen to us doesn't always need to go through our *brains* in order to make its influence felt upon our life style! A great many people have already been caught up in this revolution of images, in other words, who never gave a thought to any of the things we wrestle with in academic institutions, governments, environmental organizations and the like. They just have a strong penchant for survival.

The man Vonnegut, once again, brought that home to me in a special, rather funny way. In a radio interview he asked the interviewer: "Have you ever wondered why so many of the young girls today are going for the long-hairs instead of the hard-hats?" (i.e., the technocrats, junior executives, military men, etc.) — this was before long hair became popular also amongst the young technocrats! "Well," said Vonnegut, answering his own question, "why shouldn't they? They're the future mothers of the race. They know perfectly well that the long-hairs have got better survival possibilities than the hard-hats. They know that without even thinking about it!"

FOOTNOTES

[1]Barbara W. Tuchman, "History as Mirror," in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Sept. 1973, pp. 39-46.
[2]Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York, 1964), p.4.
[3]George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Toronto, 1969).
[4]Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," in Lorne J. Forstner and John H. Todd, eds., *The Everlasting Universe* (Lexington, Mass., 1971), pp. 7 ff.
[5]Quoted by Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background* (London, 1950), p. 95.
[6]René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. by Laurence J. Lafleur (New York, 1950), p. 40.
[7]Quoted by Sidney Pollard, *The Idea of Progress* (London, 1968), p. xii.
[8]Parts of it are carried in John G. Burke, ed., *The New Technology and Human Values* (Belmont, Calif., 1966), pp. 8-9.
[9]Quoted by Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington, 1969), p. 18.
[10]Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in Forstner and Todd, *op. cit.*, pp. 144 ff.
[11]Cf. George Grant, *Time as History* (Toronto, 1969), p. 34.
[12]Kurt Vonnegut, *The Sirens of Titan* (New York, 1970), pp. 274-75.
[13]Ellul, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[14]*Cf.* E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (New York, 1973).
[15]Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journals and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. II, *My Country Right or Left* (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 30.

EPILOGUE

This has been called an apocalyptic age. A generation which lived under the threat of a nuclear holocaust and called for an end of the Christian era proclaimed the death of God and warned of the imminent collapse of nature. It is not surprising that these positions should have been adopted in swift succession; they reflect a critical turning of the modern mind. It should not be surprising, though it is startling, to apprehend how far those apocalyptic perspectives do justice to important aspects of the long-term encounter of man and nature on the prairies.

The papers requested for the 1974 sessions of the Canadian Plains Studies interdisciplinary seminar were not intended, cumulatively, to link the prairies so dramatically to the spiritual crisis of modern man. Following a survey of attitudes to nature in the modern Western tradition, papers were to survey the character of and changes in the prairie habitat in the era preceding settlement, and the transition from Indian to European patterns of utilizing prairie resources. Varying perceptions of the prairies were to be viewed through such screens as Indian attitudes to nature, seventeenth century scientific knowledge, and the ethnic cultures of prairie immigrants. Aspects of man-nature interactions were to be examined through the history of resource management on the one hand and the characterological impact of the prairie environment on the other. And finally, the response of the literary imagination to the land was to cap the series.

The seminar was exploratory and experimental; it was important not to become bogged down in case studies of the impact of agriculture upon the prairie dog population of the Regina plains (though that is important), or in endless discussion of the nature of nature. Above all, the seminar was not intended to provide a premature master explanation for the findings of the several papers. This epilogue will not, after the fact, make good that lack, although some extended commentary on their interconnections should be risked.

The long history of the subject moves from natural systems enclosing man to human systems enclosing nature. As in most epics, it is best to begin at the end. Laurence Ricou's report on the image of the land in recent prairie literature must come as a distinct shock. Both his studies of prairie prose fiction and his paper here on recent prairie poetry carry the burden of a land that has lost its meaning and has become hostile, menacing, "empty as nightmare." The significance of this perception of "the nothingness of prairie space," says Ricou, is that it "enables us to confront the reality of our own existence, to understand the nothing that is our personal reality" (p. 72). Prairie farmers harvesting five dollar wheat may protest that the authors are alienated fragments, cast-offs of prairie culture; certainly students in the seminar preferred the homey "kitchen window" species of prairie poetry — and Ricou, himself, acknowledges an impor-

tance in that species that has not been seriously examined. But one may suspect that what Ricou's poets are saying today, prairie people are feeling now and will be expressing tomorrow. Perhaps not so explicitly; the "nothing" is full of dread, and most of us prefer quickly to cover the void.

The shock of recognition, however, is doubled by Douglas Hall's analysis of changing attitudes to nature at large in the modern western tradition, and especially by his reminder of Nietszche's famous dictum: "When man has nothing left to will, he will will — nothing." Prairie man, too, may lie "under the ribs of that death." If so, it is profoundly ironic and tragic that such literary perceptions should appear at a time when man has, but for a little tidying up, come to a refined point of domination of the nature that is the prairies. Has he done so only to find he has "nothing" in his hands? And to the extent that that is so, how could it come to be?

Ricou's writers come at the end of a long cycle — or series of cycles — in which the emptiness (or death) of the prairies has been repeatedly experienced as various perceptions of it have gone into eclipse. Although J. G. Nelson's presentation to the seminar is not available here, his recent work, *The Last Refuge*, reconstructs elements of the era when nature still dominated man, when beaver in the valleys and bison and fire on the plains had more impact on landscape change than did man. At the end of this period Indian culture reached a refined point of harmony with the natural environment, which was celebrated in religion and manifested in patterns of utilizing prairie resources. Irene Spry uses the European institution of the "commons" to explain the Indian relationship to the land. Survival on prairie resources alone did not admit of the occupancy of one space; occupancy of various spaces accorded to season and need in a recognized system of common property resources. The coming of the white man initiated a transitional stage lasting some two centuries, from 1670 to 1880, ending in the "triumph" of man as an "ecological dominant."

The Hudson's Bay Company attached the region to the European metropolis, exchanging native dependency upon the prairies directly for regional dependency upon a distant and complex market. For the time being the Bay Company did not disrupt the system of common property resources, and it was possible for Indian attitudes toward nature to persist under the illusion that the compactness of their world had not been fractured. As interlopers multiplied, a transitional stage of open access resources prevailed. However, by the mid-eighteenth century, precisely when commercial agriculture in England was encroaching so heavily on the English commons, the Company came under heavy fire for its failure to settle the lands entrusted to it. D. W. Moodie explains how its primary critic, Arthur Dobbs, utilizing the best climatological and agricultural science of the day, developed the first sophisticated (though mistaken) image of the country and its capacity for intensive agriculture and settlement. Largely motivated by designs of imperial power and trade, he was a forerunner of the more complete attachment of the prairies to European and world commerce a century later. As population increased after 1870 a

system of open access resources could not continue; scarce resources had to be rationed, and the transition from the prairie commons to private property and the open market was completed. In the space of two centuries beaver and bison mutely observed the end of their prairies; the Indian experienced his version of the death of God and the collapse of nature; and the fur trade society lost its plains. What Ricou's authors force us to ask, is whether the triumph of western technology and the commercial spirit on the prairies has not been won at the price of other attitudes to nature brought to the prairies by European and even (perhaps especially) Ontario or American immigrants, attitudes which, for a time, lent themselves to the process of prairie development, but which were perhaps ultimately less compatible with the ethos of the marketplace than they were with the Indian attitudes to nature they helped displace.

Although it remains a subject unexplored in itself, in the restructuring of regional economics a new attitude to nature came to dominate the prairies. One could compose an account of the "great transition" hinged upon Henry Kelsey's remark that the only vastness of the prairies was that of economic opportunity, but that would be overly simple. It is a widespread view that while in Indian culture a wholeness of life prevailed embracing religion and economics in a compact unity, for the European, religion and economics were split into separate watertight compartments. The complexity of European civilization makes the impression an easy one, and a simplistic conception of the nature and dominance of laissez-faire theory underscores it. Ironically, students of a century and a half ago would have defended laissez faire in terms also of the harmony of man and nature: "*laissez aller, laissez faire car le monde va par lui-meme.*" However, for most settlers of the prairies, the high theory of laissez faire was not as significant in the formation of their attitudes to nature as elements of the Christian tradition which rationalized their worldly activity.

Given the diversity of religious traditions that poured into the prairies, one says more than that at one's peril, but popular religious attitudes probably had more in common than formal theological systems allowed. It can at least be suggested that for most prairie settlers, nature was God's creation, providing a setting for man's entire life and intended for such fulfilment as the "world" allowed. To use nature, to labour, not only provided physical means of survival, but spiritual rewards as well. Nature provided at least a limited revelation of God and hence of the meaning of life, and was intended for the fulfilling of one's obligations towards one's fellows as well as to God. Although Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Jewish emphases differ in the matter, the land was held in trust from a God who had regard for mercy and justice. Private property, even for Protestants, was a conditional concept; productivity was as socially useful and religiously significant as a buffalo hunt; in the short run the wicked might prosper, but in the long run prosperity was among the blessings added to the intrinsic rewards of righteousness. Nature was seen, then, in a religious

context; the land was beneficent; and early prairie novelists portrayed it so. Any impact Darwinism might have had on this outlook was being softened early in the main settlement period by the writings of Tolstoy, Drummond, Kropotkin, George, and Kidd, and if the prairie climate had a special rigour, in the popular myth of the north that, too, was auspicious for the further progress of mankind.

At one level, the religious attitude to nature during the settlement period had at least as much, and probably more, in common with the Indian outlook on nature as it had with Kelsey's simple linkage of the prairies and economic opportunity. It would be a mockery of prairie history to suggest that outright economic motivation played no part in prairie development. Robert Forke, the Progressive leader, declared, "We went west to get rich." Baptists lambasted the Winnipeg élite's pursuit of wealth and frivolity. And so signal a figure as J. A. M. Aikens, standing at the nexus of Winnipeg Methodism and the city's commercial life, roundly condemned the materialism and lust of riches endemic in the great western boom. But such citations testify not simply to the existence of crass motives, but to the struggle to maintain historic attitudes to man and nature against the constant erosion of secularization (defection?) and reduction into, among other things, the spirit of capitalism. Such an observation helps explain the role of religion in successive prairie protest movements. The regional struggle was not simply economic; it was a defence of a world-view that contained a well-diffused attitude to nature. It was precisely at the point of his collaboration with nature in the production of a basic, life-giving good that the prairie farmer felt most keenly his virtue and resented most bitterly the exactions of the grain trade and the pre-eminence of eastern industry in the national system. The problem was not just that particular manifestations of the spirit of capitalism struck the farmer's pocketbook, but that unadorned commercialism was incompatible with values he attributed to nature, work, and trade.

If that was pre-eminently true of the prairie Anglo-Protestant, Carl Tracie's paper above indicates that it was more obviously the case with Mennonite and Doukhobor immigrants. There was no reason intrinsic to the nature of the prairies why communal agriculture might not have prevailed (latter day Hutterite success is indication enough of that); and it is a testimony to the influence of culture and perception in response to the prairies both that these groups should have desired a different way, and that they should in varying degrees and ways have been forced to abandon, compromise, or restrain their inclinations. In their turn they were subjected to the same pressures as the Indian, and their conception of what nature was for had largely to be set aside.

The confrontation of Indian and left-wing Reformation groups with the system of landholding and commercial relationships which subdued the prairies was obvious and direct and the issue clear. For the mainline prairie Protestant, however, the encounter has been more complex and has resolved itself more slowly, for despite his desire to see his antagonist outside

himself, located in an only partly mythical "East," deep within himself were commitments to elements of his own tradition which had nurtured the very commercial spirit and structures which he now protested.

The new attitude to nature which displaced the Indian was rooted in a radically historical world view. The Indian's world was primarily one of space; the European-Christian's, one of time. Indian religion, like most religions, was expressed in naturalistic terms; the Christian, with the Hebraic and Islamic, in historical categories. God was above and outside nature; man (and, dialectically, nature) was fallen and in need of redemption; time, not space, was the primary dimension of the drama of restoration. The consequences of this outlook were profound. Nature was desacralized and could be investigated with impunity; human efforts were oriented to salvation within or through, but not from, the temporal order. Various scholars have suggested how, especially in its Protestant forms, these Christian orientations might have contributed to the momentous leaps in the understanding of the structure of nature in the sciences and to the emergence of the enormously productive exploitation of nature known as capitalism. The religious sanctions which abetted such emergences were ones to which the prairie Protestant was committed. They facilitated his acceptance of the benefits of applied science and capitalism. A readiness for growth, productivity, and the technological fruits of science have marked the last century on the prairies as much as Biblical archetypes have frequented prairie literature.

In the course of the nineteenth century, however, both economics and science were provided with autonomous rationalizations, implying an autonomous and neutral natural order, a notion obviously counter to Christian providential conceptions. That development, together with the more general secularizing spirit of the age, has served to separate the benefits from the Christian myths, and has undermined them. To think of a beneficent nature in that context was an impossibility. Such trends matured more rapidly in the metropolis than in the hinterland and were rampant in the cultural centres of the western world in the interwar years. In the post-war period, the categories of both nature and history went into decline as the European mind, trying to recover from its encounter with nihilism, resorted to existential modes of thought. On the Canadian prairies, however, the reaction to the secularizing process remained strong through the interwar years. Abetted by their economic situation prairie residents rejected more firmly than the rest of the nation the conception of an autonomous system of industrial capitalism — and endorsed more clearly the prophetic Biblical injunctions respecting economic enterprise. At the same time, and equally part of the regional protest, endemic Biblicism struggled with the notion of secularism itself, fundamentalists opposing and liberal Protestants adapting.

On the question of an autonomous science and technology, the issue has been far less distinct (or less studied?). It was difficult before 1929 to see any conflict between maximum production and the welfare of the land

when the product both prospered the farmer and benefited mankind. Science and technology, autonomous or not in the higher realms of rationalization, not only nurtured production prior to 1929 but also restored the prairies after the drought. Since the war, the development of more supple economic mechanisms and the expansion of world markets for the bounty of the prairies in wheat, oil, and potash have in general maintained an unprecedented prosperity. His trade dependent upon the careful computation of a host of measurable variables, the prairie farmer has become "modern"; he, too, is a child of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and has joined the "Lords and Masters of Nature." It does not appear to matter much any more whether nature is considered beneficent or not.

Undoubtedly the prairie population at large and Ricou's authors are at different points in the continuum of secularization. It may be significant that the poets are none of them, now, residents of the prairies, and are more immersed in metropolitan culture than is the region of which they write. That is not so true of prairie novelists, but at one level the more significant fact is that they all are in the same continuum, not that they are at separate points within it. There is some reason, then, to think that "prairie man" is not as far from Ricou's authors as a nostalgic view of prairie society might suggest, and Douglas Hall's discussion of the issue of modern man's relation to nature speaks more immediately to the prairies than it would seem at first glance. (To say so is not to annul the idea of regionalism, but only to suggest that the regional and the universal are finally means of approaching each other.)

It is perhaps appropriate that, at this writing, the Alberta government is engaged in a highly sophisticated tour of European centres of enterprise and finance in search of expeditious and imaginative ways to spend its mountainous oil revenues. Its practice of leaving a small trail of scholarships to Alberta universities behind, may lead the occasional European student to Professor Ricou's door, where he will find that the spiritual struggle of modern man is evident in prairie literature as in his own. Ricou and his authors, along with the other contributors to this volume, do not tell us only about the prairies, but hold up a mirror to mankind.

The experience of the void is not a new one for mankind, and confronting it on the prairies may be a rewarding if unsettling experience. Biblical tradition and Christian teaching, even many hymns sung by isolated prairie congregations, have spoken of the "nothing" that is man (though they do not stop there). One might, in a moment of recklessness, suggest that prairie writers are pointing up the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, that nature and man are not made of any pre-existent matter, with its corollary that nature, considered outside the context of faith, sooner or later reduces itself to nothing in the experience of mankind.

The spirit of capitalism must *finally* be considered antithetical to the Christian spirit, including the Protestant ethic, and insofar as the prairies have been a unique Canadian centre of protest on that very point, time has been bought for a renovation of attitudes to nature on the prairies. That

task remains largely contingent, however, upon larger shifts in structure and attitude in the western world at large. The ecology movement of the 1960's was a beginning. One need not get hung up on whether to follow William Leiss in *The Domination of Nature*, that alienation from and abuse of nature are inevitable consequences of an economic system predicated upon the domination of man by man, or Douglas Hall and George Grant that systems devised for the domination of nature have in time led to the mastery of man by man. In the context of such reflections it is not mere nostalgia to wonder about the forms in which lost attitudes to nature in the Indian, immigrant, and Canadian Christian cultures might find rebirth. Once again one must adopt the familiar prairie stance and lean into the wind as one walks.

A.R.A.

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